English Radical Thought, 1768-1788, as Seen in the Works of Richard Price and Joseph Priestley

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ENGLISH RADICAL THOUGHT, 1768-1788, AS SEEN IN THE WORKS OF RICHARD PRICE AND JOSEPH PRIESTLEY

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

June 1961
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author owes a debt of gratitude to Miss Kennedy, librarian at the Elizabeth M. Cudahy Memorial Library, Loyola University, Chicago, and to Miss Bertha Heller, librarian at the Decatur Public Library, Decatur, Indiana, through whose assistance she was able to use rare copies of certain works of Price, as well as other necessary works not locally available.
LIFE

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INTRODUCTION

Nineteenth century English liberalism developed from the radicalism of the eighteenth century, one important segment of which was to be found in the ranks of the Protestant Dissenters. During the latter half of the 1700’s Richard Price and Joseph Priestley were the leaders of this group in political matters. Both were products of the Dissenting Academies established to meet the educational needs of those Protestants whose religious convictions barred them from the universities. A curriculum which included courses of a purely utilitarian nature, emphasized the study of John Locke, and encouraged independent thought and study along with free and open discussion provided a climate for the development of radical political thought.

Of the Dissenting radicals G. S. Veitch observes that "Price and other Dissenting orators ... form links between the eighteenth-century radicals and the new model of Radicalism which emerged during the French Revolution."¹

The purpose of this thesis is to show the nature of radical thought in England during the quarter century preceding the French Revolution through a study of the writings of Richard Price and Joseph Priestley.

CHAPTER I

PRICE AND PRIESTLEY

Richard Price and Joseph Priestley found a broad area of common experience upon which to base their deep friendship, which began in 1765 during one of Priestley's annual visits to London. Both had come from families dominated by the rigors of orthodox Calvinism but had through early tutorial influence moved steadily away from Trinitarianism toward Unitarian heterodoxy. Both became zealous ministers who considered their theological work of first importance and their passionate devotion to liberty the outgrowth of their religious convictions. Yet there were differences between them in character, in personality, in convictions.

Price, ten years older than Priestley, seems not to have been outstanding in appearance. He was small and not very robust, but

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3This is to be inferred from the tenor of Priestley's Memoirs and Morgan's Memoirs of Price, as well as from numerous references in the works of Price and Priestley.
what he lacked in physical attractiveness was compensated for by his great sincerity and gentleness. He possessed also an unfailing courtesy which even his adversaries could not help but admire. Nevertheless his works proclaim a character not easily intimidated by opposition.

Born on February 23, 1723, at Tynont in the Welsh county of Glamorgan, Richard Price was the son, by a second marriage, of the Rev. Rice Price, a dissenting minister. Although the Prices were comfortably situated financially, their home reflected the gloomy atmosphere of extreme Calvinist austerity, for Rice Price held that God had destined the majority of mankind for hell, reserving only a few favorites for heaven regardless of the conduct of their lives.

Education began at home for young Richard, with a portion of that early learning entrusted to a neighborhood youth. From the age of eight or ten he was educated at dissenting academies, first at Neath, a little later at Pentwyn in Carmarthenshire. Price's education in liberal theology began at Pentwyn under the Rev. Samuel Jones, whose religious principles, teachings, and

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4 Carl B. Cone, Torchbearer of Freedom: The Influence of Richard Price on the Eighteenth Century Thought (Lexington, 1952), pp. 2-3. Morgan asserts in his Memoirs of Price (pp. 16-17) that it was Price's courtesy in a controversy with the philosopher, David Hume, which led to the friendship between the two men.

5 This biographical sketch is based primarily on Morgan, Memoirs of Price. Roland Thomas, Richard Price, Philosopher and Apostle of Liberty (London, 1924) and Cone, Torchbearer of Freedom, also follow Morgan in their accounts, although they also correct and enlarge on the Memoirs.
especially his recommendations for reading were calculated to lead his pupils along the path toward Arianism. At fifteen, Richard was transferred to the Rev. Vavasor Griffith's academy at Talgarth in Breconshire. Here his education seems to have continued along liberal lines.

The death of his father in June, 1739, left Richard in rather straitened circumstances, since the bulk of the Price estate was bequeathed to John Price, the second son of Rice Price's first marriage. A year later, following the death of his mother, Richard decided to enter the ministry. With the aid and encouragement of his uncle, the Rev. Samuel Price, a London minister, he enrolled at Coward's Academy in that city. Here he came under the influence of the celebrated JohnAMES, the only layman to direct a dissenting academy.

Upon completion of his studies, Price accepted a chaplaincy with the family of a Mr. Streatfield at Stoke-Newington. This position he held for thirteen years, combining with it the work of private secretary to Streatfield, preaching assistantships in various London congregations of Dissenters, and private theological study. By the death of his uncle and of Streatfield, Price was left financially independent of his congregation.

Shortly after his marriage to Miss Sarah Blundell, Price

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6Morgan (*Memoirs of Price*, p. 6) relates that at this time Price's Father, upon discovering him reading Dr. Clarke's Sermons, flung the book into the fire in a fit of anger over this lack of faith and orthodoxy.
accepted a pastorate at Newington Green, where he remained until he became pastor at Gravel Pit in Hackney in 1784. The year 1758 marked the publication of the first of Price's major works, a treatise on morals. In 1763 the Royal Society published in its Transactions his solution to a difficult problem in chance and probability, and a 1764 supplement to this work won him membership in the society. At the solicitation of some of Price's clerical friends, the University of Aberdeen conferred on him an honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity in 1767.

Although for Price the study of theology remained of first importance, from 1769 on he began to devote more of his time to such secular studies as science, mathematics, and politics. The 1770's and 1780's saw the publication of works on life insurance and of the highly controversial tracts on political theory, the national debt, and the problem of depopulation. Price's praise of the American Revolution and later of the French Revolution in its early phases made him many enemies and established for him among certain groups in England the reputation of disloyalty. Others, however, hailed him as the champion of liberty. In America his support of the Revolution was rewarded with an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws from Yale University, membership in various learned and philanthropic societies, and an invitation to move to America as a financial adviser to Congress.

7 Thomas, Richard Price, p. 42.
8 Ibid., pp. 93-94.
Price survived by only five years the death of his wife in 1786. In February, 1791, his already poor health was fatally undermined when he officiated at two funerals in unpleasant weather. He died on April 19, 1791.9

Among those who called Price friend may be numbered Lord Shelburne, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, John Howard, the prison reform agitator, and two French Ministers of Finance—Turgot and Necker. His relations with Adam Smith, however, were somewhat uncertain. It seems that while Smith was composing his Wealth of Nations, Price was among the group to whom the chapters were read and who made suggestions for revisions. Later Smith seems to have disavowed any friendship with Price.10

About the time that young Richard Price was probably taking his first steps away from Calvinism, Joseph Priestley was born at Fieldhead near Leeds in Yorkshire.11 The date of his birth is given as March 13 (Old Style), 1733. The boy was very early placed in the care of his maternal grandfather, with whom he remained until the death of his mother in 1740. In 1742 he was taken into the home of his father's sister, Mrs. Keighley. Although

10 Cone, Torchbearer of Freedom, pp. 53-68.
11 This account of Priestley's life is based primarily on his Memoirs. Anne Holt, Joseph Priestley (London, 1931) is also based on the Memoirs, although the author has consulted other sources to fill in details.
his aunt was a rigid Calvinist who insisted on daily family prayer and family catechizing, it was here that Priestley experienced the first liberal influences, for the well-to-do Keighley home was always open to dissenting ministers, even the most heretical. Two such guests were Mr. Graham of Halifax and Mr. Walker of Leeds. Before long an intimate and lasting friendship grew up between Mr. Graham and the young Joseph.

Mrs. Keighley sent her nephew to a large free school where, at about the age of twelve, he says, he began to progress in Latin and Greek. During the holidays he studied Hebrew with the Rev. Mr. Kirby, whose school he later attended. From the time he was sixteen until he was nineteen he continued his studies at home. He taught himself French, Italian, and High Dutch in preparation for a merchant's career. His reading included such philosophers as Locke and Watt. He also taught Hebrew to a neighboring Baptist minister, and toward the end of this period he had begun on his own the study of Chaldee, Syrian, and Arabic. During this time Priestley's already liberal religious tenets were further broadened by his association with the Rev. Mr. Haggerstone, who twice a week taught him mathematics.

By 1752 Priestley had decided to become a minister and entered Caleb Ashworth's academy at Daventry. Although Ashworth himself was a conservative in religion, the atmosphere at Daventry was such as to encourage free inquiry and free discussion in all matters. In these discussions Priestley could usually be counted upon to take the liberal side. It was at Daventry, too, that he
first encountered Hartley's *Observations on Man*. This work established Priestley in his doctrine of philosophical necessity and marked the starting-point of his really heterodox position on most theological questions. During his student days, also, he composed his first major work, the *Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion*.

Priestley's clerical career began in 1755 with his acceptance of an assistantship at Needham. An inadequate salary led him to propose the establishment of a school for children of the congregation, but his liberal views had made him suspect, and parents were unwilling to entrust their children to so heretical an influence. At his next parish in Nantwich, Cheshire, he did open a school for about thirty boys and a half dozen girls, whom he taught in a room separate from the boys' classroom. Although he professed not to care for teaching, he derived much satisfaction from it, especially from the extra work in science made available to the upper class.

In 1761, a few years after the opening of Warrington Academy, Priestley accepted a tutorship there in Belles-Lettres. Before long his lectures were increased to include the theory of language.

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13 In his *Memoirs*, p. 40, Priestley remarks that the school day lasted from seven in the morning until four in the afternoon, with no recess except one hour for dinner. He granted no holidays except the "red letter days."
oratory and criticism, history and general policy, laws and consti-
tutions of England, and the history of England, as well as elo-
cution, logic, Hebrew, civil law, and anatomy. It was while he
was at Warrington that he married the daughter of Isaac Wilkinson,
the ingenious and well-to-do owner of an iron works. In 1765
there occurred the meeting in London with Franklin and Price, and
somewhat later his election to a Fellowship in the Royal Society.
The University of Edinburgh about this time conferred on him the
degree of Doctor of Laws.

From 1767 until 1773 Priestley held the pastorate at Mill
Hill Chapel in Leeds. Here he worked at his experiments on air,
resumed his study of speculative philosophy, and published a num-
ber of political tracts, of which the most important was probably
his Essay on the First Principles of Government published first in
1768. Lord Shelburne, in 1772, had offered him the position of
librarian and literary companion, and in this capacity he accompa-
nied Shelburne on a tour of the continent in 1774. By 1780, how-
ever, their relations had become strained, and they parted, with
Priestley richer by an annual pension of £150 in fulfillment of
an earlier agreement. 15

As junior minister of the New Meeting Society in Birmingham,
Priestley spent the next ten years in intellectual pursuits, in

14 These lectures on history and general policy contain the
substance of Priestley's political philosophy. They were pub-
lished in 1788 with no substantial changes.

15 Priestley, Memoirs, I, 85-86.
political and religious controversies, and in the congenial company of the Lunar Society.\textsuperscript{16} In 1791 the "good life" suddenly ended for him with the Birmingham Riots, a popular protest against his known sympathy for the French Revolution. The riots claimed his home, his library, and most of his private papers and scientific equipment. Succeeding Dr. Price at Hackney, he then settled with his family in the security of London, but the capital no longer received him with its old friendliness. In 1795, therefore, the family emigrated to America.

New York and Philadelphia welcomed Priestley when he arrived, but no group invited him to a pastorate, although he did occasionally preach. Disappointed, he moved to Northumberland, Pennsylvania. There he continued to write and to experiment. He never became an American citizen, nor did he ever take the active part in American politics then permitted to immigrants. His pen, however, could not be kept out of the political inkpot, but the controversies in which he engaged were of a personal and defensive nature which tended to dull rather than to enhance his reputation in America. He died at Northumberland on February 6, 1804.

Priestley has been described as thin and wiry, alert and quick in movement, with sparkling yet kindly eyes.\textsuperscript{17} Francis Jeffrey observed of Priestley's \textit{Memoirs} that they "present a very

\textsuperscript{16}Holt, \textit{Joseph Priestley}, p. 127.

singular picture of that indefatigable activity, that bigotted
vanity, that precipitation, cheerfulness, and sincerity, which
made up the character of this restless philosopher. 18 There was
in him also an independence of spirit, born perhaps of his training
in the dissenting academies, which combined in his character a cer-
tain "coldness of heart towards his most valued friends" 19 and a
generous tolerance of those whose opinions and principles were op-
posed to his own. 20

The more liberal of the dissenting academies, such as those
attended by Price and Priestley, encouraged completely free in-
quiry into religious and political matters and trained their stu-
dents well in the art of controversy both in the pulpit and through
the press. Many who went into the academies Trinitarians convinced
of the righteousness of 1686 came out Unitarians certain that Locke
and the Revolution had only begun the work of reformation. 21 Yet
at the same time that the young divinity students were imbibing the
doctrine of their natural right to religious and political freedom,
they were, under English law, incapacitating themselves for the

18 Francis Jeffrey, rev. of Joseph Priestley, Memoirs of Dr.
Joseph Priestley . . ., Edinburgh Review or Critical Journal, IX
(October, 1806), 136.

19 Ibid., p. 148.

20 Ibid.

21 Irene Parker, Dissenting Academies in England, Their Rise
and Progress and Their Place among the Educational Systems of the
Country (Cambridge, 1914), pp. 125-126; H. McLeish, English Edu-
cation under the Test Acts: Being the History of the Non-Conformist
exercise of these liberties. Barred from active participation in politics, dissenting ministers of the Unitarian persuasion turned to writing and preaching as a means of influence, becoming thus the spokesmen for the radical wing of an already articulate minority seeking religious liberty and political equality.22

Among these clergymen Price and Priestley soon gained preeminence as expounders of extreme dissenting opinion in political philosophy—a philosophy soon adopted by the radical politicians of the day. Their pamphlets and published political sermons enjoyed a wide popularity often enhanced by the controversy they engendered. Priestley's best known political work, An Essay on the First Principles of Government, was first published in 1768 as a resume of the theories he had been presenting in a course at Warwick Academy between 1761 and 1767. Although he had hoped for an early publication of these Lectures on History and General Policy to supplement the Essay, they did not appear in print until 1788. These two works contain the substance of his political philosophy. His other political works are primarily applications of his theories to more or less specific situations. One such pamphlet is The Present State of Liberty in Great Britain and Her Colonies (1769), written probably in response to government action against the outspoken John Wilkes.

In many of his writings Priestley assumed the role of leader

and spokesman for the Dissenters as he urged them to work for full religious and political equality. The earliest of these, *A View of the Principles and Conduct of the Protestant Dissenters with Respect to the Civil and Ecclesiastical Constitution of England*, appeared in 1769. This was followed by *A Free Address to Protestant Dissenters as Such in 1771; A Letter of Advice to Those Dissenters Who Conduct the Application to Parliament for Relief from Certain Penal Laws* in 1773; and, in 1774, *An Address to Protestant Dissenters of All Denominations, on the Approaching Election of Members of Parliament*. All of these works were published anonymously.

After a silence of six years, Priestley once again returned to the problem of political equality regardless of religious affiliation when in 1780 he published *A Free Address to Those Who Have Petitioned for the Repeal of the Late Act of Parliament in Favor of Roman Catholics*. In 1787 he again expressed his views on the subject in *A Letter to the Right Honorable William Pitt* on the Subjects of Toleration and Church Establishments. During these twenty years he also published many sermons in which he made at least passing reference to the question of freedom of thought and conscience.

Priestley's utilitarian viewpoint, though evident from the beginning, is strikingly manifested in his *1780 Address in Favor of Roman Catholics* and in a 1788 Sermon on the Subject of Slave Trade delivered as part of an organized effort in England to promote some action toward the prohibition of slavery in the
English colonies.

Price wrote less profusely but probably more incisively than did Priestley. Three pamphlets, four published sermons, and a published letter comprise his works of political importance to 1789. His first two pamphlets—Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty, the Principles of Government, and the Justice and Policy of the War with America, first published in 1775, and Additional Observations on the Nature and Value of Civil Liberty, and the War with America, published in 1777—are expositions of his basic political theories. In 1778 both pamphlets were published in a single volume entitled Two Tracts on Civil Liberty. A third pamphlet, Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution, and the Means of Making it a Benefit to the World, published in England in 1785, was intended primarily as an admonition to the Americans to remain true to the liberty they had so recently won. In it Price also advised them of the best method of accomplishing this aim.

In 1783 the Ulster Assembly of the Volunteers of Ireland met to discuss steps to be taken to equalize the representation in the Irish Parliament. At that time they requested Price and others to express their views on the matter in letters to be printed as part of the Proceedings of the Assembly. Price's letter is important for a study of his philosophy, since it helps to clarify certain of his theories.

Political matter became sermon material for Price in 1779, but this remained the exception rather than the rule for him. There are, however, four important political sermons. Two of them
were preached on government-proclaimed fast days in 1779 and 1781. He used these occasions, since they were of political origin, to expound his political philosophy, especially with regard to British relations with the American colonies. At the dedication of a new academy at Hackney in April, 1787, he gave a sermon entitled *The Evidence for a Future Period of Improvement in the State of Mankind, With the Means and Duty of Promoting It*, in which he reiterated his teachings on the perfectibility of mankind and the part which government plays in the process of that perfecting of men. The culmination of Price's works came in 1789, when he delivered the sermon at an anniversary service commemorating the Revolution of 1688. *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country* included no new doctrines, but it stated the old ones so effectively that Burke was provoked to answer it in his *Reflections on the French Revolution*.

It was through these works and others of lesser importance that Price and Priestley became identified with eighteenth century radicalism. Disqualified by their religious tenets to participate actively in English politics, they nevertheless gave impetus to the radical movement by supplying radical politicians with arguments to support actions they already advocated. The doctrines of Price and Priestley thus contributed to the philosophy of the
eighteenth-century radicals.

CHAPTER II

LIBERTY

Richard Price and Joseph Priestley made liberty the foundation of their political philosophy. Price defined it as being governed by one's own will, while servitude is guidance by the will of another. "To be FREE," he said, "is 'to be able to act or to forbear acting as we think best'; or 'to be masters of our own resolutions and conduct.'" For both Price and Priestley liberty is a quality inherent in human nature. Indeed, as Priestley asserted, it is the "foundation of all honour, and the chief glory of our natures." Because, as Priestley explained, man is capable of enjoying a high degree of liberty and

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1Richard Price, Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty, the Principles of Government, and the Justice and Policy of the War with America in Two Tracts on Civil Liberty, the War with America, and the Debts and Finances of the Kingdom (London, 1778), p. 11.


3This is assumed by Price and Priestley throughout their political works.

self-command, a state of slavery is most unnatural to him.  

Men are ultimately free, Price wrote, because they are by nature equal, although that equality is not absolute. In the state of nature there existed such subordinations as those of children to their parents and those arising from differences in personal qualities or abilities of men and from servitude based on voluntary compacts. Natural equality, then, must rather be understood as the relationship existing among mature men, independent and capable of self-direction. In this sense it may be said that God has not created any man the "vassal" or subject of another or given anyone the right arbitrarily to abridge another's liberty. Even the obligations of gratitude to a benefactor cannot deprive a man of his liberty or place the benefactor in the position of a master with the right to determine how that obligation shall be discharged. Similarly, in the state of nature the possession of greater strength or knowledge or property might give one greater influence, but it would not confer upon him any sort of authority or oblige any other person to obey him. Although a further inequality might arise through the relative

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5 Joseph Priestley, Lectures on History and General Policy; to Which Is Prefixed, an Essay on a Course of Liberal Education for Civil and Active Life (Birmingham, 1783), p. 377; Joseph Priestley, A Sermon on the Subject of the Slave Trade; Delivered to a Society of Protestant Dissenters, at the New Meeting in Birmingham; and Published at Their Request in The Theological and Miscellaneous Works of Joseph Priestley, edited with Notes by John Towill Rutt (London, 1817-1832), XV, 380.
positions of master and servant, this inequality and apparent loss of liberty on the part of the servant is accidental, as it were, since the relationship has arisen on terms meeting with his consent and he retains the power to terminate this service at any time. 6

Price thus asserted that equality or independence is one of the essential, God-given rights of man, 7 while Priestley postulated man's natural right (of which he cannot be deprived) of freeing himself from all oppression and from everything imposed upon him without his consent. 8 When Priestley wrote of liberty, he did so in the context of man as a member of civil society. He gave a picture of man in the state of nature, a condition antecedent to all government, in which he was possessed of every liberty to regulate his own conduct and to secure his property. As individual interests, however, would be at variance, so would the view of the right to advance these interests vary. The sense of security would be in proportion to strength, with the weak being oppressed by the strong. Seeing the advantages of security and advancement to be obtained by united effort, men


7Ibid., p. 22.

would organize themselves into a civil society or state. In order, however, to do this successfully, they must be willing to sacrifice some of the natural liberties of their primitive state.\(^9\)

That which each would retain of his original liberty may be called his civil liberty, while that which he would acquire as his share in the direction of the new community is his political liberty.\(^10\)

Civil liberty Priestley defined as "that power over their own actions, which the members of the state reserve to themselves, and which their officers must not infringe."\(^11\) Man, therefore, possesses civil liberty if he has retained the most important of his natural rights.\(^12\) These govern only his own conduct and encompass his right to freedom in this matter from control by the community or its agents, as well as his power to provide for his own happiness and advantage.\(^13\)

Priestley considered political liberty to be "the power which the members of the state reserve to themselves, of arriving at the public offices, or at least, of having votes in the

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\(^12\)Priestley, Lectures on History, p. 282.

nomination of those who fill them."\textsuperscript{14} It may be equated with "the right of magistracy"--the right each has to control the actions of others by having his private opinion or judgment accepted as that of the society.\textsuperscript{15} Upon forming a society the members determine the amount of political liberty they shall receive in compensation for surrendering a part of their civil liberty. They may place the condition of having a voice in decisions affecting the society, or they may subject themselves to government by a number of civil magistrates who have the power to make any laws they wish.\textsuperscript{16} When all the members of the society have an equal right to attain the highest offices and therefore to direct the opinion and action of the whole community, political liberty is perfect. Those persons, however, who by circumstances of birth or fortune are excluded from such offices or from a voice in determining who shall hold them cannot be said to have any political liberty at all, for they have no share in the government, that is, no control over the actions of others in the society. To this extent they are unfree, regardless of the extent of their civil liberty.\textsuperscript{17}

While it is to the advantage of the citizen to retain as

\textsuperscript{14} Priestley, \textit{First Principles of Government}, Works, XXII, 11. Italicized in the original.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., pp. 22-23.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 12.
much as possible of the civil liberty and to gain as much political liberty as he can, ultimately the real measure of his freedom is not merely the amount of each kind of liberty he possesses, but also the relationship which exists between the two. Political freedom with equal power on the part of all to make the laws or to delegate representatives to make them means little if the laws are oppressive and deprive individuals of control over their own actions. At the same time the possession of broad civil liberty may be accompanied by the exclusion from a share in the government. Such a situation not only deprives a person of his political liberty, but also places his individual rights in a precarious position since they are then at the mercy of the king or the governors, who may at any time consult their own interests instead of those of the people. Although, therefore, the possession of political liberty is not an absolute guarantee of civil liberty, it is its most effective safeguard, for the larger the governing body the less the probability of oppression.

Price's concept of liberty does not differ essentially from that of Priestley, even though instead of Priestley's two divisions Price used four. What Priestley called political liberty Price named civil liberty, and all that Priestley included in

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civil liberty Price placed in the categories of physical, moral, and religious liberty. For Price each of his four divisions includes in some sense the idea of self-direction or self-government. It supposes also the presence of a force which is opposed to the person's own will and which, therefore, insofar as it operates, produces a state of slavery.

Physical liberty, he held, is that principle of self-determination which makes a man an agent and gives him a command over his own actions, so that those actions are properly his and not the effect of some foreign agent acting upon him. Thus if his "volitions" were not really his because they began not with himself, but with some cause outside himself over which he had no control—or if he were in some way compelled always to follow a will outside of and different from his own—he would lack physical liberty. He would be simply a passive instrument acted upon by some extraneous force but never himself acting. He would be, as it were, a machine having no principle of motion within himself, no command over events, and therefore "incapable of merit and demerit." 

Man has within himself the power of following his sense of right and wrong, of conforming his actions to his reasoning and his moral principles. This moral liberty or self-government is

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21 Price, Observations on Civil Liberty, pp. 2-5.
22 Ibid., pp. 3-5.
lost when reason is overruled by passion. In such a situation man
would be most truly a slave, for being at the mercy of his pas-
sions, he would be, said Price, only "a wicked and detestable be-
ing, subject to the tyranny of base lusts, and the sport of every
vile appetite." 23

Religious liberty consists in the power of practicing, unmo-
lasted, that form of worship which one thinks best. It implies
one's power of deciding for himself what is religious truth and of
making that conviction of conscience the rule of his conduct. It
is opposed to the imposition of human authority in religion which
demands conformity to a particular form of faith and worship and
denies the right of private judgment. 24

Just as the three preceding kinds of liberty reside in and
are proper to individuals, so civil liberty belongs to a civil
society or a state. It is the power of that society to govern it-
self by laws of its own making. It is a kind of collective lib-
erty which rules out subjection to any power outside itself over
which the body of the people exercises no direction or control.
The imposition of any will distinct from and independent of the
will of the majority of the community by legislation or by the
power to dispose of its property constitutes a breach of civil
liberty. 25 Without religious and civil liberty, Price felt, man

23 Price, Observations on Civil Liberty, pp. 2-5.
24 Ibid., pp. 3-5.
25 Ibid.
would be no more than an animal possessing no rights, no property, no conscience, and subjected absolutely to the will of anyone who would effectively claim authority over him. 26

The concept of liberty includes the right of every person to security in the possession of his good name, his property, and his life; yet the right to exercise one's liberty is not to be construed as an absolute right, for no one may use his liberty to destroy or unduly abridge another's. 27 To the objection that he advocated a liberty synonymous with a right to do as one pleases with no restraint Price replied that, subject to some limitations, such an interpretation of his doctrine might be admitted. Moral liberty could be called the power to do as one pleases, since man's will, when it is perfectly free from every restraint, moves him invariably to virtue. No man chooses to do evil. In acting wickedly he is conscious of an inner tyranny of passion which overpowers his judgment and compels him to a conduct which he hates and condemns. He is truly a slave, unable to do as he pleases. 28 Licentiousness, generally interpreted as an excess of liberty, is in reality its opposite--the absence of liberty--and must be curbed in the state. 29 "It is," Price wrote,

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26 Price, Observations on Civil Liberty, pp. 5-6.
28 Ibid., p. 11.
government by the will of rapacious individuals, in opposition to the will of the community, made known and declared in the laws. A free state, at the same time that it is free itself, makes all its members free, by excluding licentiousness, and guarding their persons and property and good name against insult. It is the end of all just government, at the same time that it secures the liberty of the public against foreign injury, to secure the liberty of the individual against private injury. I do not, therefore, think it strictly just to say, that it belongs to the nature of the government to entrench on private liberty. It ought never to do this, except as far as the exercise of private liberty encroaches on the liberties of others. That is; it is licentiousness it restrains, and liberty itself only when used to destroy liberty.30

To define liberty, however, merely as the supremacy of law or of government by law is inadequate. Liberty exists in a government by law in proportion to the justice of the laws and the extent of participation by the body of the people in their enactment. In this regard Price felt that

Liberty . . . is too imperfectly defined when it is said to be 'a Government by LAWS, and not by MEN,' if the laws are made by one man, or a junto of men in a state, and not by COMMON CONSENT, a government by them does not differ from Slavery.31

The truth is, that a government by law is or is not liberty, just as the laws are just or unjust; and as the body of the people do or do not participate in the power of making them.32

The alienation of religious liberty or of civil liberty in the collective sense Price held to be unlawful. Men may not

31 Ibid., p. 7.
32 Price, General Introduction, Two Tracts on Civil Liberty, p. x.
surrender their right of private judgment in matters of religion, nor may they allow their fellowmen to determine for them the faith they must accept or the manner in which they must worship. In the same way no civil society may legitimately cede to any jurisdiction outside itself the power to legislate for it and to dispose of the property of its members. Since the right to civil liberty is an inalienable right of human nature, such a cession, if it can be considered binding at all, would bind only the individuals who made it, but never their posterity.33

Both Price and Priestley were convinced of man's infinite capacity for improvement34 and held liberty a requisite for mankind's approaching a state of perfection. Civil and political liberty, Priestley felt, are necessary for that sense of security and independence and that assurance of enjoying and bequeathing his property without which a man would be unwilling to work for the improvement of agriculture or any other field of enterprise.35 Conversely, a sense of liberty, a knowledge of the laws of human conduct, and a share in government give one a feeling of his own

33 Price, Observations on Civil Liberty, p. 25.


importance and lead to that "free and manly thinking" which raises him far above his possible condition under an arbitrary govern-
ment. 36 Price observed that it is of the utmost importance that there be a system of perfect religious and civil liberty which will give to truth and reason a just latitude of operation and to human powers an opportunity to discover and demonstrate the extent to which human improvement can be carried. 37 Such liberty, he thought, must include liberty of conduct in all civil matters, of discussion in all speculative matters, and of conscience in all religious matters. 38

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36 Priestley, Lectures on History, p. 283.
38 Ibid., p. 21.
CHAPTER III

RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES

A man's right to his life, his property, and his good name was generally conceded in the eighteenth century, but the origin, particularly of the right to property, and the extent to which that right could legitimately be exercised were matters of discussion. Both Price and Priestley saw the right to property as a natural right and the securing of property as one of man's activities in the state of nature. The prospect of a greater security in his possessions they considered one of the motivating forces for a man's abandoning this primitive state for one of a civil society.¹ To those who held that property and rights are not antecedent to civil government, but rather created by it, Price replied that this idea is contradictory to the generally accepted notion that the end of government is the protection of property and rights, since what government gives it can also take away.²

The distribution of property among the citizens has a direct

¹Price, Observations on Civil Liberty, p. 6; Additional Observations, pp. 12, 16; Priestley, First Principles of Government Works, XXII, 10; Lectures on History, p. 272.

²Price, Additional Observations, p. 23, note.
relationship to freedom in government. In a republic, Priestley thought, as great an equality in riches as possible ought be maintained. Equality and "public spirit" are the backbone of a republic, but these can only operate when citizens are willing to spend themselves and their wealth for the good of the community. Accumulation of riches on the part of a few, however, is generally accompanied by an aggrandizement of power to the detriment of the whole society. It behooves the republic, therefore, to prevent whatever may encourage an unequal distribution of property.3

On this matter Price also held that since property is the basis for power, all free states must be concerned to prevent too great an inequality in ownership. The most advantageous condition he felt to be one midway between the savage and refined states of man—a state in which the inhabitants live simply and naturally, sustained by the fruits of their agricultural activity. Property in such a state is almost equally divided, and industry is necessary to supply the needs of the community. As long as such a condition lasts, government will be free and equal, and oppression will be unknown. When, however, luxuries and refinements invade the community, a few will begin to acquire more and more property and with it more power, so that before long the natural equality among the citizens will be lost, and government will become merely

3Priestley, Lectures on History, pp. 298-299
the instrument of the few for the oppression of the many. 4 America, especially the West, he said, best approached this state and ought to take care that foreign trade never ruin it by the introduction of undue luxury. 5 Ireland, on the other hand, suffered from this very problem of inequality which subjected its citizens to an "aristocratic tyranny." Trade and liberty, he hoped, would eventually produce the desired diffusion of property there. 6

Price discussed briefly plans presented from the time of Plato onward for the annihilation of property and the establishment of a community of goods which "would make it impossible for any one member of a State to think of enslaving the rest, or to consider himself as having any interest distinct from that of his fellow-citizens." 7 Such theories he thought pleasing objects of speculation and perhaps not "wholly impracticable." At some future time experiments in such a government might exclude most of the

4 Richard Price, Observations on Reversionary Payments: on Schemes for Providing Annuities for Widows; and for Persons in Old Age; etc., 5th ed. (London, 1792), II, 281; Importance of the American Revolution, pp. 68-70.

5 Price, Importance of the American Revolution, pp. 74-76.

6 Richard Price, Letter in Proceedings Relative to the Ulster Assembly of Volunteer Delegates on the Subject of a More Equal Representation of the People in the Parliament of Ireland. To Which Are Annexed Letters from the Duke of Richmond, Dr. Price, Mr. Wyvill, and Others (Belfast), 1763, p. 31.

7 Price, Importance of the American Revolution, p. 70.
causes of evil from society by providing a climate in which little but personal merit would be the basis for distinction in the state. 8

If the right of property or ownership implies not only possession, but also the right to dispose of property, the question arises of how far the right of disposition extends. Although in his Lectures on History Priestley asserted that during one's life, given the use of reason, one has absolute disposal of property, 9 in First Principles of Government he qualified the right both of property and of its disposal by saying that:

The very idea of property, or right of any kind, is founded upon a regard to the general good of the society under whose protection it is enjoyed; and nothing is properly a man's own, but what general rules, which have for their object the good of the whole, give to him. . . . Whoever enjoys property or riches in the state, enjoys them for the good of the state, as well as for himself; and whenever these powers, riches, or rights of any kind, are abused, to the injury of the whole, that awful and ultimate tribunal, in which every citizen hath an equal voice, may demand the resignation of them. . . . 10

The British system of entail, which prevented alienation of land and kept it within a family from generation to generation, he considered dangerous to the common good. Unless ignored by the judges or defeated by their authority, the law, he thought, only

8 Price, Importance of the American Revolution, pp. 70-71.
9 Priestley, Lectures on History, p. 278.
engenders discontent, subverts man's liberty, and hinders commerce.11

On the problem of bequeathal of property by testament Priestley preferred the middle way between primogeniture and complete freedom in the disposition of property.12 Against Turgot's (and other's) position that inheritance must be only by law and according to consanguinity he placed the suggestion that in particular cases—which individuals can best judge—there may be good reasons for one's not bequeathing his property to his nearest relatives. In answer to the opposite and generally accepted idea that power over property is indefinite and permits the direction of its disposition for all time he argued that since one cannot see into the distant future, he ought to bequeath his property to those of his survivors in whose wisdom he trusts, leaving them a free hand in the use of it. The placing of absolute conditions upon a bequest indicates a lack of confidence in future generations, who will, Priestley was certain, be wiser and probably better than the present generation. In any event, the state ought to prevent by law any disposal of property which would be manifestly harmful in future times.13

12Ibid., p. 278.
13Ibid., pp. 276–279. As an example of bequests injurious to future ages Priestley cited a medieval tendency to bequeath the greatest part of the landed property to the Church's tendency fortunately (in Priestley's view) checked by English law (p. 277).
Price's comment on the power to bequeath property was a condemnation of primogeniture as cruel and unjust, the enemy to liberty and equality, since its only effect is to enhance a family name by concentrating property in one branch of a family.14

More important for Price was that disposition of property called taxation, the necessity of which both he and Priestley took for granted. In 1785 Price admonished the new American nation that the Confederation Congress must be given a definite and enforceable power to tax if the United States was to have any credit abroad.15 The rate, the method, and the source of taxation, he felt, were considerations not so much of right as of expediency, closely related as they were to the tranquillity of the nation.16 Given the fact that governments must tax to exist, the problems then are: From whom do the right and power to tax come? Is this power unlimited?

The whole radical doctrine of taxation was summarized by Price in two terse statements: "All taxes are free-gifts for public services,"17 and "TAXES are given, not imposed."18

14Price, Importance of the American Revolution, p. 72.
15Ibid., p. 18.
17Price, Observations on Civil Liberty, p. 6.
18Price, Additional Observations, p. 27.
Priestley reminded his readers that it is a fundamental maxim in English government that the sole power of giving the people's money, i.e., of taxing, lies with the representatives of the people. For Price, also, this is one of the essentials of liberty. Both felt that in the matter of taxation adequacy of representation, although essential to true liberty, was of less importance than that the legislators should themselves submit to the taxes they levy upon others and in the same proportion. If this is the case, taxes will not be unduly heavy and property will not be endangered, for in safeguarding their own interests the legislators will protect the interests also of their fellow-citizens—at least those of the same rank and fortune. If, however, they levy a tax from which they themselves are exempt, they have in effect enslaved the rest of the citizens and placed their property in jeopardy, for the same principle which allowed this first imposition may be made to operate for the seizure of all their property.

The question of the right of one country (e.g., England) to tax another (e.g., America) and thus to dispose of the property of


its people was, in principle, a weightier one at this time than that of taxation within the country. The answer revolved around the relationship of two countries to each other. Price stated unequivocally that no community has any power over the property or legislation of another unless both are justly represented in the government. Further, there are no causes which can be placed for the acquisition of rightful authority of one state over another—neither conquest, nor compact, nor any obligation of gratitude. The only right conferred by conquest is that of compensation for injury and reasonable security against further aggression. The cession of authority to a foreign power even by a compact is unlawful. If, however, it could be considered binding at all, it could be so only for the individuals who made the compact, but never for their posterity, for the civil liberty of a society—its power of legislation and of the disposition of its own property—is an inalienable right of human nature.

To the objection that the American colonies were not an independent country, but a dependency of Great Britain and therefore subject to taxation by Parliament, Price replied that the parts of any empire, apart from the possession of common interests, stand in the same relationship to each other as independent countries.

23 Ibid., pp. 24-26.
24 Ibid., p. 25; Additional Observations, pp. 28-29.
For joint government, however, they might form a kind of confederacy in which all parts are equally represented, but no one part ought to govern all the rest. Priestley appealed to British history against the Stamp Act and similar taxes. Since the time of the Conquest, he argued, Britain had held a number of dependencies or realms each with its own power to legislate and to tax. No one realm, not even England, had these powers over another. This was America's position—a realm, self-governing though recognizing a veto power in the British King. The colonies had been taxing themselves to pay their own governmental expenses and had besides been contributing to the funds of the King according to their ability without Parliamentary interference until the passage of the Stamp Act. Such taxation by Parliament was surely unlawful, for it was imposed by a jurisdiction in which the colonies had no voice, and those who imposed the tax did not pay it, but only received it to their own advantage. Eventually the power by which the English could command the smallest sum from the Americans could be used also to command the whole of their property. This would be nothing but the most abject slavery on the part of

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In order that a man remain truly free it is not enough that
he have power over his material possessions; he must also be free
to use his reason for the advancement of truth and the improvement
of mankind. But of what value is this liberty of thought if it is
not accompanied by the freedom to publish by writing or speaking
the findings of reason? In a system of government denying liberty
of expression, Priestley contended, the intellectual climate would
be unfavorable to works of genius and the discoveries so necessary
to human improvement. Two barriers to intellectual advancement
would be set up—fear and the lack of an adequate motive. If lib­
erty of publication is greatly restricted, the constant fear of
official reprisals whenever any minister would choose to take um­
brage at a writer's work would discourage any ventures into fields
of speculation outside the ordinary paths. What publications there
were would be marked by a diffidence inconsistent with the spirit
of discovery. Besides engendering a fear that would hinder pro­
gress, a government-controlled press would remove a great incentive
to men to give free scope to speculative efforts, namely the
thought of publishing their findings and the prospect of gaining
fame.28

27 Priestley, Address on the Approaching Election, Works, XXII,
492-493; Joseph Priestley, The Present State of Liberty in Great
Britain and Her Colonies. By an Englishman, Works, XXII, 393;
Price, Observations on Civil Liberty, pp. 41-43.

28 Priestley, First Principles of Government, Works, XXII,
132-133.
Price considered liberty of discussion one of the essentials of perfect liberty. Unfettered freedom of research in all areas, "an open field for discussion" of all religious doctrines, liberty of publication on all speculative and doctrinal points—these he thought to be the important means of promoting the improvement of mankind. Only error and vice, but no reasonable doctrine, can suffer from open discussion, he felt.

One of the most valuable rights of men, Price and Priestley agreed, is the right to examine and criticize both public measures and the public actions of civil officials. Priestley saw this aspect of liberty of expression also as a means of safety for the state. Unless men are free to express their opinions on all matters, but especially on governmental affairs, and to censure

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31Price, Evidence for a Future Period of Improvement, p. 32.
32Price, Importance of the American Revolution, p. 22.
33Price, Evidence for a Future Period of Improvement, p. 32.
35Price, Importance of the American Revolution, p. 29.
36Ibid., p. 22; Priestley, Lectures on History, p. 274; Priestley, Present State of Liberty in Great Britain, Works, XXII, 389.
those who betray public trust, the state will have no way of
"collecting and increasing the wisdom of the nation." \footnote{Priestley, Lectures on History, p. 275.} Freedom
of speech and press coupled with the right of petition and remon-
strance is a good and easy method of correcting abuses in the
state, for the fear of shame and embarrassment brought on by
general censure would move officials to correct such abuses even
if a sense of justice and truth should fail to do so. \footnote{Ibid., p. 292.} Even when
there are no abuses, freedom of debate would help so to educate
the mass of the people that improvement in government would be
both gradual and easy, and public opinion would eventually be
sufficient to enforce any useful regulation or law. \footnote{Ibid., p. 455.}

It seemed to Priestley that even arbitrary governors would
find that the granting of liberty of expression would be in the
long run a lesser danger to their power than the prohibition of
it. The knowledge of public opinion may prevent the abuse of
civil power from rising to the point where violent subversion of
the established government would be likely to occur. \footnote{Ibid., p. 316. In this connection Priestley observed that
"Governors may be seized by libels; but this is better than to be liable to be seized and strangled before any danger be appre-
hended. . ."} Besides, when the people can find in words an outlet for their complaints,
they are less likely to have recourse to violent measures of redress. 41

As with any freedom, liberty of expression may be liable to abuse. Priestley felt that such abuse by individuals could be adequately checked if the offender were punished for any injury he could be proved to have done to another's good name or property. If the alleged injury, however, has been done to a person in his character as a public official rather than as a private individual, redress ought to be obtained in the same way in which the injury was done, namely by influencing public opinion, lest in this case recourse to law should have the effect of subverting liberty of speech and press. 42

It was contended that certain doctrines were so sacred and some speculative opinions so dangerous as to justify a civil restriction upon the discussion of them. Price refused to admit the validity of this argument. Any doctrine as sacred as this would naturally preclude discussion by its very clarity. He admitted that dissent from established doctrines sometimes causes social upheavals, but here the fault lies with the civil officials who, in establishing and attempting to enforce particular doctrines, have exceeded their powers. Their duty is to protect the citizens in their persons and property, not to defend truth. He considered

41 Priestley, Lectures on History, pp. 292, 455.
42 Ibid., p. 275.
the only obligation of government with regard to doctrinal disputes to be the maintenance of equal liberty for all sects by punishing any attempts to encroach upon another's liberty. \footnote{Richard Price, A Discourse on the Love of Our Country, Delivered on Nov. 4, 1789, \ldots to the Society for Commemorating the Revolution in Great Britain. With an Appendix Containing \ldots the Declaration of Rights by the National Assembly of France, 2nd ed. (London, 1789), Appendix, p. 10.}

Some speculative opinions, Price conceded, undoubtedly have dangerous tendencies, but since these usually do not go beyond the realm of speculation, the danger is seldom real. Men yield rather to common sense as a guide for their actions. The teaching of such an opinion, therefore, with no attempt to put it into practice ought not to be prohibited. If such an attempt were actually made to the detriment of public peace or safety, the overt act, but not the doctrine itself, would be subject to civil jurisdiction. \footnote{Ibid., pp. 31-33.} Opinions or their tendencies ought to be of no concern to civil officials; civil power ought rather to confine itself to the safeguarding of liberty and the preservation of peace. \footnote{Richard Price, Observations on Civil Liberty, p. 25.}

Closely related to freedom of expression, and indeed difficult to maintain without it, is liberty of conscience. Religious freedom is based upon what Price considered the inalienable right of private judgment. \footnote{Price, Importance of the American Revolution, pp. 22-27.} This same right Price termed a "natural
and divine right.47 Liberty in religion is for Price the power to practice without interference the form of faith and worship which one thinks best and to base his moral conduct on the decisions of his own conscience with regard to religious truth.48 It is the power to profess and practice that form of religion one believes most acceptable to God.49 Freedom of conscience includes much more, therefore, than mere toleration or sufferance by the state of any form of worship different from that of the established religion. Rather, both Price and Priestley maintained, it implies the right of all persons regardless of their religious tendency—even unbelievers—to equal protection by the state and an equal right to the exercise of political liberty.50 It further implies the right to practice one's faith openly with no fear of penalty for nonconformity to the established method of worship.51 Perfect religious freedom permits also the freedom to propagate one's

47 Joseph Priestley, A Free Address to Protestant Dissenters as Such. By a Dissenter, Works, XXII, 268.
48 Price, Observations on Civil Liberty, p. 3.
49 Price, Additional Observations, p. 11.
51 Ibid., p. 451; Priestley, First Principles of Government, Works, XXII, 96; Joseph Priestley, A Letter to the Right Hon. William Pitt... on the Subject of Toleration and Church establishments; Occasioned by His Speech against the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, on Wednesday, the 28th of March, 1787, Works, XIX, 122-123.
The natural and inalienable right which all have to religious liberty, Price warned, places a natural limitation on the exercise of this right. No one may use his own right to freedom in religion to encroach upon or destroy another's. Within these limits everyone may do as he pleases in religious matters. Any person, however, who by reason of his religious beliefs is moved to persecute another because of his different faith ought to be restrained and deprived of his own liberty.

Englishmen of even the late eighteenth century were prone to consider Roman Catholics the enemies of religious liberty in others and therefore not themselves entitled to it. To Price and Priestley, also, this was a matter of serious concern. With other Dissenters, and especially as Unitarians, they viewed Catholicism as a grossly superstitious corruption of primitive Christianity, the enslaver of human minds, the world's archpersecutor, and the Antichrist of the Apocalypse. In spite of this extreme view, they urged complete religious liberty for Catholics. To Price it seemed an injustice to withhold from any man his rights because of

52 Priestley, Address to Protestant Dissenters as Such, Works, XXII, 268; Price, Importance of the American Revolution, p. 26.

53 Price, Additional Observations, pp. 11-12.

54 Typical of Priestley's opinion of Catholicism is his description in A Letter to a Layman, on the Subject of the Rev. Mr. Lindsey's Proposal for a Reformed English Church upon the Plan of the Late Dr. Samuel Clarke, Works, XX, 30. Price's attitude may be seen in Importance of the American Revolution, pp. 38-39.
his religion. With regard to Catholics specifically, freedom, he thought, would undoubtedly make them more loyal to a free government, while the abridgement of liberty might understandably detach them from the interest of the whole nation. Priestley also used this argument, but he went on to urge other practical reasons for granting religious freedom to Catholics. Protestant persecution of Catholics in England, he held, would invite Catholic persecution of Protestants in France. In England Protestants had nothing to fear from a Catholicism daily decreasing in numbers and influence. An openly practiced Catholicism would remove much of its mystery and one of its most potent arguments for conversion—that Protestants persecute Catholics because their own religious tenets are not strong enough to stand up against those of Catholics in a fair discussion. The idea of breaking faith with heretics and absolution from civil oaths cannot really have much force among Catholics, he felt, since they have never used these methods to ease their lot. Finally, it would be a good thing for England to grant complete toleration before France could do it; otherwise England stood to lose much of her best population as well as her position of preeminence.

The establishment and support by the government of one


particular form of religion and the taxing of all citizens to maintain it, along with the enactment of social and political penalties for nonconformity, is contrary both to the right of all to religious liberty and to the end and activity proper to government. This would seem to be the sum of Price's and Priestley's teachings with regard to the alliance between the English government and the Anglican Church. The only concern of civil government, Priestley contended, is the present life and happiness of men by providing for a peaceful existence and the security of each one's person and property.57 Price held similarly that the civil magistrate is properly occupied only in the maintenance of peace, not in the support of truth; only in the defense of property, not in the care of souls.58 Thus any control over the private judgment of men or over their conduct with regard to a future state is outside the realm of government.59 Both Price and Priestley, however, would have countenanced an active but equal support and encouragement of all religions by the collection of tithes, provided each person had the right to determine which religion his tax money should


58 Price, Evidence for a Future Period of Improvement, p. 23.

support, but certainly nothing more than this. Both looked forward to a time when all connection between religion and civil policy should be dissolved.

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60 Price, General Introduction to Two Tracts on Civil Liberty, p. xiii; Evidence for a Future Period of Improvement, p. 57, note; Priestley, First Principles of Government, Works, XXII, 97.

CHAPTER IV

THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

The writings of Price and Priestley helped to provide the philosophical arguments for the parliamentary reform urged by eighteenth century radicals. Basic to the concept of government advanced by these two leading Dissenters were the theories that man has an unlimited capacity for improvement and that government is the result of a compact entered into by men for the purpose of securing more effectively their possessions and their natural rights. In the earliest stages of human development men lived primarily as individuals, each engaged in protecting his own possessions and rights. In such a state the weak were always at the mercy of the strong, and each one found his person and property in potential danger. At the same time little improvement was possible in man's way of life, since each person must be occupied with a variety of tasks, and no one could build on the accomplishments of others. When men, social by nature and capable of perfection, saw the advantages to be gained by concerted action, they organized themselves into a society in which the combined efforts of all could be employed to secure the property and common

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1Kent, English Radicals, p. 67.
interests of all the members. Each man was then free to devote himself to a particular task oriented to the improvement of human life, so that each generation would be able to build its discoveries upon those of the past. 2

Civil government is, then, Price and Priestley held, the means men employ to secure their natural rights to life, property, and liberty. 3 It is the method human prudence dictates for marshaling the wisdom and the efforts of the whole society to insure the preservation of security, peace, and liberty 4—an expedient necessitated by the wickedness and selfishness of men. 5 According to Price, men have a right to establish a government because they have a right to the free and peaceful possession of their property, their lives, and their good names. 6

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3Priestley, Lectures on History, p. 272; Price, Discourse at Hackney, 1781, p. 18.


Only free governments, Price insisted, are legitimate and just, for they alone can give the security from oppression which men seek in civil society.\(^7\) Any civil government, insofar as it is free is

the creature of the people. It originates with them. It is conducted under their direction; and has in view nothing but their happiness. All its different forms are no more than so many different modes in which they choose to direct their affairs, and to secure the quiet enjoyment of their rights. -- In every free state every man is his own Legislator. -- All taxes are free-gifts for public services. -- All laws are particular provisions or regulations established by COMMON CONSENT for gaining protection and safety. -- And all Magistrates are Trustees or Deputies for carrying these regulations into execution.\(^8\)

Ideally, he thought, the will of the people in the direction of the state would be manifested by the direct personal participation of all in the affairs of the state.\(^9\) Priestley, too, held that perfect political liberty encompasses equal and direct control of government.\(^10\) He considered perfect democracy the only equitable and fair method of forming a state,\(^11\) and thought that in its origin every state consisted of such an equal republic.\(^12\)

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\(^7\)Price, *Discourse at Hackney*, 1781, p. 19; *Additional Observations*, pp. 15-17.

\(^8\)Price, *Observations on Civil Liberty*, pp. 6-7.


\(^11\)Ibid.

\(^12\)Ibid., p. 26.
Since it is mutual advantage which impels men to live in society, the ultimate determinant in everything relating to government is, Priestley stated, "the good and happiness of the members, that is, the majority of the members of any state."\textsuperscript{13} So important to him was the idea of the happiness of mankind that he considered God to be actuated by no other motive, so that actions possess no intrinsic virtue except as they relate to the common good.

Virtue and right conduct consist in those affections and actions which terminate in the public good; justice and veracity, for instance, have nothing intrinsically excellent in them, separate from their relation to the happiness of mankind; and the whole system of right to power, property, and every thing else in society, must be regulated by the same consideration: the decisive question, when any of these subjects are examined, being, what is it that the good of the community requires?\textsuperscript{13}

A closely-knit society consisting of comparatively few persons living close together can determine by direct vote the methods to be used in securing the well-being of the community. Both Price and Priestley recognized, however, that as the population and area of the state increase, this ideal method becomes impracticable, and the members must yield to the expedient of

\textsuperscript{13} Priestley, First Principles of Government, Works, XXII, 13. Jeremy Bentham attributed the germination of his theory of "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" to a reading of this statement of Priestley. Leslie Stephen (History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century, 2nd ed. [London, 1881], II, 61n.) suggests, however, that a prior claim to the origin of this idea may be held by F. Hutcheson, who used the phrase in his "Inquiry concerning Moral Good and Evil", sec. iii, 8.

\textsuperscript{13} Priestley, First Principles of Government, Works, XXII, 13.
delegating their powers of government to a group of representa-
tives. The actions of this representative body, as long as they
are limited by the power entrusted to them, may be considered to
have been performed in the name of the whole community. 15

Price felt that even though liberty is thus decreased, gov-
ernment need not be tyrannical, for the people may still be said
to be their own legislators. Since all authority is derived from
the people, magistrates are but carrying out the will of the
society. Actually, they do not govern the state but are governed
by it and may most properly be termed the servants of the pub-
lic. 16 The king himself is but the first executive officer, the
highest of the public servants, created by the law and as subject
to it as the least of the people. Regardless of his personal
qualities, then, the king, as first magistrate and chief representa-
tive of the community, commands the respect and obedience of the
people. 17

In speaking of representative government, Priestley indicated
that the impossibility of direct popular government in a large
state requires the election of public officials to act in the name
of the people, with the whole power of the society "necessarily

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15 Priestley, First Principles of Government, Works, XXII, 13;
Price, Observations on Civil Liberty, pp. 7-8; Additional Observa-
tions, pp. 2-3.

16 Price, General Introduction, Two Tracts on Civil Liberty,
p. iii; Additional Observations, p. 27.

17 Price, Love of Country, pp. 23-24; Additional Observations,
p. 27.
and almost irreversibly" delegated to them. 18 Yet the representatives, since they are appointed by the people to conduct public business, are servants of the people. The society, therefore, may call the magistrates to account for the performance of the duties delegated to them, and may dismiss and even punish them when they abuse their power. 19 Although he denied the obligation of implicit obedience to every law enacted by the legislature, 20 he warned that laws ought to be clearly oppressive before any drastic action is taken against them, lest being unable to enforce bad acts, magistrates lose the power to enforce good ones. 21

When Edmund Burke objected that Price's theory of the origin of government is destructive of all authority, Price replied that the concept of authority is present in both the divine right theory of government and the popular sovereignty theory, but with one difference. The first theory establishes an unlimited authority derived from heaven, while the second recognizes a limited authority derived from the people. Yet this limited authority is not the less real because based on equal laws made by common consent. A state which governs itself is not anarchical, and a government established by the people to restrain licentiousness and to gain

21 Ibid., p. 28.
security against violence is not likely to encourage or permit the commission of outrages.\textsuperscript{22} Eleven years later, in 1789, in his Discourse on the Love of Our Country, which drew even greater objections from Burke because of its radical tone, he taught that "[O]bedience . . . to the laws and to magistrates, are necessary expressions of our regard to the community; and without this obedience the ends of government cannot be obtained, or a community avoid falling into a state of anarchy that will destroy those rights and subvert that liberty, which government is instituted to protect."\textsuperscript{23}

Free governments, both Price and Priestley felt, besides being the only just and legitimate governments, are the means by which mankind can advance toward perfection. Assured of security, men in a free state find themselves at liberty to devote their energies to the improvement of the arts and sciences. But more than this, their awareness of their dignity as free men provides an incentive for the effort necessary to such improvement. A despotic government, on the other hand, leaves its subjects with a sense of insecurity and a fear of some unknown or unperceived evil which, with an accompanying consciousness of humiliation and

\textsuperscript{22} Price, General Introduction, Two Tracts on Civil Liberty, p. vii.

\textsuperscript{23} Price, Love of Country, p. 21.
slavery, tends to breed an apathy unfavorable to progress. 24

Since both writers considered government a kind of necessary evil, a concomitant of man's imperfect nature, 25 they were concerned about the problem of how much government is compatible with freedom. Price termed too much government that which is a needless or wanton exercise of power, or that which extends beyond what is absolutely necessary for the preservation of the peace and safety of the state. 26 In establishing a government, men intend to secure their personal liberty, not to divest themselves of it. The state, therefore, ought not to limit the liberty of any citizen except insofar as his use of it infringes upon his neighbor's liberty. 27

Basing his arguments upon the concept of the good of the whole as the proper measure of government, Priestley taught that a state is defective when it refuses to individuals the assistance it could give and oppressive when it limits a man's liberty to provide for himself when this is to his advantage. 28 When men enter society, they surrender their right to provide personally


25 Priestley, Sermon at Birmingham, 1780, Works, XV, 37; Price, Discourse at Hackney, 1781, p. 18.

26 Price, Observations on Civil Liberty, p. 51.


for security and happiness, but it is not true that collective wisdom and action is always better than that of individuals. Most of men's activities can be performed better when left to the individual will, and there are some—such as family relationships, religious matters, and the search for truth—which are greatly inconvenienced by government regulation. In principle, then, the state ought to confine itself to those things which are manifestly social in character and leave all else to the individual. While it is true that individual claims inconsistent with the public good are null and void, the state ought to be very slow to curb personal liberty unless some real inconvenience arises.\(^29\)

To describe a free government is not necessarily to describe the best form of government, for liberty, Price contended, although the most important requisite of a civil society, is not the only one. The best forms of government unite with free and equal liberty the qualities of "wisdom, union, dispatch, secrecy, and vigour." It is the will of the community which governs in any free state, but that state is best which gathers into this will most of the wisdom and experience of the community and at the same time executes it with the most speed and vigor.\(^30\) Both Price and Priestley denied that their philosophy of government advocated republicanism as the best kind of government or that they desired


\(^{30}\) Price, Additional Observations, pp. 8-9.
to make Britain a republic. Although Price wished America well in her republican experiment, he considered Britain unsuited to that form because of the extremes in her social system. In theory and form the British government was excellent and certainly adapted to the needs of the country. He objected only to its corruption and the inadequacy of its representation. He, and the Dissenters in general, were seeking, not a change from the British mixed form of government, but a restoration of its purity and vigor through a reform in Parliament.

Priestley also noted the attachment the Dissenters felt for this government. This opinion he shared, because to him it seemed that a limited monarchy provides for the welfare of the people better than a republic can. With the security for property to be found in a republic it combines the advantage enjoyed by a despotism in wartime (that is, secret decisions quickly executed). At the same time fewer restraints upon personal conduct are necessary because the vices of individuals are less

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24 Price, Additional Observations, p. 8, note; Evidence for a Future Period of Improvement, pp. 30-31; Priestley, An Answer to Dr. Blackstone's Reply, Works, XXII, 332.


30 Price, Evidence of a Future Period of Improvement, pp. 30-31.


detrimental to the state than they are in a republic. Commerce and industry are more likely to flourish in a limited monarchy and to make it a prosperous state, since luxury need not be as strictly curbed as in a republic. Finally there is greater stability and permanence in a monarchy such as Britain's. The hereditary character of the highest office and the separation of governmental powers with each branch balancing and checking the others provides this security.36

Price thought that the best form of government might very reasonably join a legislative house whose members are hereditary with one which is elected and representative (as in England) and have at the head of the whole government one supreme magistrate. Such a system would provide useful checks in legislation and aid the effectiveness of administration without abridging liberty. In this situation, however, it is requisite that the elective body provide fair representation, have a veto power over all public measures, and possess sole power to tax and to initiate appropriations bills.37 One important limitation upon the non-elective body of Parliament demanded by both Price and Priestley was the exclusion of the Bishops as representatives of the ecclesiastical power in England. They thought that seats in Parliament should be open to clergymen as private persons and on the basis common to all citizens, but that in their ecclesiastical position they

37 Price, Observations on Civil Liberty, pp. 11-12.
ought to confine their activity to the care of souls. 38

Both considered the elective portion of the legislature the most important branch in any government since, chosen by the people, it is the agent through which the liberties and rights of the citizens are secured. 39 Price observed, however, that representative bodies do not all necessarily insure freedom in equal measure. This depends upon the control which the people are able to exercise over the legislative body. Only by complete representation can a state give complete security and be properly called free. 40 Every "independent agent"—everyone who has a "will and judgment of his own"—ought, therefore, to have a voice in the election of public officials. 41 Without such complete participation in elections some classes would remain unrepresented and the state would not be truly self-governing. 42 Liberty in this situation he held to be only partial, and if representation were greatly restricted, only the outward form of liberty would exist, but not its substance. 43

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38 Price, Importance of the American Revolution, p. 72, note;
Priestley, First Principles of Government, Works, XXII, 95-96;
39 Priestley, The Present State of Liberty in Great Britain, Works, XXII, 380; Price, Observations on Civil Liberty, pp. 6-8;
41 Price, Letter to the Volunteers of Ireland, p. 28.
Perfect political liberty, Priestley agreed, is present only where all members of the state have equal power to attain the highest public offices or of having a voice in the election of those who shall fill them. He did not hold, however, that such perfect political liberty is necessary for the good of mankind, since its attainment is possible only in states too small to be practicable. The larger states more conducive to the common good require some restraints on liberty, though the nature and extent of these are not easy to determine. He considered it suitable to place property qualifications for participation in government. The highest office, such as that of king, ought to be hereditary. For the others, the highest offices ought to be filled by the vote of those possessing considerable fortunes. Ordinarily, persons of this class are better qualified by reason of a better education to act for the common good, while their proportionately greater fortune keeps them interested in the state for the protection of that property. Nevertheless, in this respect, moderate fortunes ought to be placed on a level with the greatest ones, since those in moderate circumstances are usually better educated and more independent than the very wealthy. The choice of magistrates ought to rest, therefore, with those whose

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46 Ibid., p. 15.
circumstances place them above corruption, for in providing for
their own interests they necessarily act in the interest of so-
ciety at large. He favored a gradation in the qualifications
for voting, with the lowest classes having a voice in the election
of the lowest officials and with participation increasing in pro-
portion to increase in wealth. Those who are extremely dependent,
however, ought not to be permitted to vote for the chief magis-
trates, lest this place more votes at the disposal of those upon
whom they depend.

Although Price posited the necessity of complete representa-
tion for perfect security and liberty, he observed in the letter
which he wrote to the Volunteers of Ireland that few states had
found it a practicable procedure to grant universal suffrage.
America, possessing the most liberal government in the world at
that time, limited it to taxpayers and property-holders. In the
existing English and Irish parliamentary situations it were better
to ask for reforms which were substantial, though "in theory un-
speakably too little," rather than for the complete reforms desir-
able but likely to be defeated because of the attachment generally
felt for long established forms of government. The possession of
property might, therefore, be made a qualification for voting, he

\[48^*\] Priestley, The Present State of Liberty in Great Britain,
Works, XXII, 385.

thought, but not religion. 50

Partial representation, while it destroys perfect liberty, does not necessarily preclude all liberty. Provided suffrage is not extremely restricted, a large measure of freedom may be retained when elections are free and frequent, and the representatives honest, independent, and responsible to their constituents. 51 If the legislators are honest and freely chosen, the common interest existing between them and the people would perhaps prevent any temptation to oppression. Another safeguard in such a legislature is that the members, as well as the rest of the society, are bound by the laws they make and the taxes they levy. Being solicitous for their own welfare, therefore, they would care for that of the state also. The ease with which grievances would be redressed in a parliament such as this would help to keep the liberties of the people safe. 52 If, however, a relatively few persons control the elections through the ability either to control votes or to purchase them, their interest would be paramount in legislative action, and not that of the people at large. In the same way, subservience to or dependence upon a higher will than their own would make the legislators instruments of that will, which would thus become the sole governor of the state.

50 Price, Letter to the Volunteers of Ireland, pp. 28-29.
51 Price, Love of Country, p. 40; Observations on Civil Liberty, pp. 9-10; Additional Observations, pp. 7-8, 36-37.
52 Price, Additional Observations, pp. 35-37.
True liberty would be effectually destroyed, and any private exercise of liberty in the state would be merely the result of mildness in administration with no guarantee of security. The actual lack of independence in the House of Commons Price deplored as "the fundamental grievance of the kingdom" and a possible source of future tyranny masquerading as liberty.

In these principles, also, lay the basis for Priestley's objections to the House of Commons as it actually operated. Corruption of the representatives he considered the greatest factor in subjecting a people to arbitrary power. When the court secures a majority in the legislature by the use of patronage, the pleasure of the king rather than the interest of the people becomes the object of legislation. In the House of Commons this court interest prevailed because of the control which a few lords or adherents of the court exercised in elections. To remedy this situation, he thought, would require the exclusion of placemen, court pensioners, and sons of nobility, since their presence was the source of disorder there. An oath against bribery and corruption ought to be required of every candidate, election by ballot.

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introduced, and a reform of election districts effected.  

The duration of parliament needed to be shortened also. Septennial parliaments, Priestley held, were originally a usurpa-
tion of the rights of the people. If one parliament had the power
to prolong its duration to seven years, another might double that
duration for itself or even make it permanent. Such an extension
of power would lead to other kinds of extensions when self-
interest of the members so dictated. To maintain the liberty of
the people, therefore, it would be better to make parliaments
triennial or even annual.

One of the reasons for Price's insistence upon short parlia-
ments was that it would help to keep the general interest within
the view of the legislators by reminding them that those whom they
govern may one day be their governors. To the Volunteers of
Ireland he wrote that the duration of parliament should cause
little problem as long as the elections lie with the people. It
seemed to him impossible that the people should not realize the
corruption latent in long possession of power and the security
against abuse to be had by keeping representatives dependent and
responsible by short parliaments. If representatives are not

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56 Priestley, The Present State of Liberty in Great Britain,
Works, XXII, 392.
57 Ibid.
58 Priestley, First Principles of Government, Works, XXII,
15-17.
59 Price, Additional Observations, p. 35.
chosen by the people, however, shortness of duration will not make them less a mockery of liberty. Specifically at this time, Price held annual parliaments to be most proper, not merely because that would insure greater popular control, but also because frequent elections would cause them to become more routine and therefore less riotous. 60

Price felt that unless the people have control over the parliament by responsibility of the members to their constituents, they forfeit their liberty entirely and retain only the power to choose periodically those who are to govern them and dispose of their property and lives. 61 Since government is a trust, the doctrine of the omnipotence of parliaments he considered an absurdity. Parliamentary powers are limited by the purpose for which they were given, and when the members exceed those powers, they betray their constituents and dissolve themselves. "If omnipotence can, with any sense, be ascribed to a legislature," he wrote, "it must be lodged where legislative authority originates; that is, in the PEOPLE." 62

Priestley, too, held that magistrates, being but the servants of the people, are accountable to them for their legislative

60 Price, Letter to the Volunteers of Ireland, p. 29.
62 Price, Observations on Civil Liberty, p. 15.
He felt that in a large state the power of the society "must necessarily and almost irreversibly" be placed in the hands of representatives whose voice is that of the whole people. They can be bound by nothing but a regard for the common good. Conscience and reason are their guides and the people their only judge. Yet since the ultimate seat of power from which government derives its authority is the people, that authority must of its nature be reversible, so that when magistrates oppress the people by perverting their delegated power from its proper purpose, that power is automatically abrogated.

The doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance was condemned by both Price and Priestley as inconsistent with the concept of popular sovereignty in government. Yet it must not be supposed that the right of revolution or the right of resistance is to be equated in every case with violence. Price saw in the right of resistance the duty of loyal citizens to exercise vigilance over the activities of government in order to check at

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64 Priestley, First Principles of Government, Works, XXII, 11.
its outset any oppression which may occur. 67 He noted that some
who deny the ultimate authority of the people in government do
admit a right of resistance in certain cases, but that in doing so
they contradict their own philosophy. If the right exists, then
the people must also have the right to judge when it should be
exercised. If they have not this right of judgment, then the
right of resistance itself is nullified. Upon this principle,
then, it can only mean the right of the people, whenever they deem
it necessary, to "change their governors, and to limit their
power." 68 He opposed the assertion that only extreme oppression
justifies resistance, since this would imply that oppression ought
not to be curbed until it has grown to such proportions that only
violent action can successfully resist it. Actually, it cannot be
resisted too soon, and even the tendencies to it ought to be
watched. 69

Since Price considered inalienable the right to civil liberty
--the right of a community to self-government--he held any attempt
by a people to recover liberty which has been lost in any way to
be legitimate. Although in such an attempt they must be concerned
about the suffering which may accompany the struggle for emancipa-
tion and the evils which may arise from a defeat, they ought to

67 Price, Sermon at Hackney, 1779, pp. 19-21; Love of Country,
pp. 28-29.
69 Price, Sermon at Hackney, 1779, p. 19, note.
recognize the temporary nature of the sufferings thus occasioned and the permanence of the evils of oppression. They ought to consider that "liberty is so inestimable a blessing" that in any probability of its recovery they ought to be willing to take the greatest risks, even at the cost of bloodshed or loss of fortune. 70

Priestley, too, was convinced that a nation has a right to change its mode of government in any way it wishes and to dismiss its public officials or even to punish them when they abuse their power. 71 Since, however, the people must be their own judges in this matter, and since they must act with a view to their own future advantage, they ought to act cautiously. 72 Nevertheless, in the face of certain conditions revolutionary action could hardly be censured. Such conditions would include great and manifest abuse with the "servants of the people" pursuing an interest separate from that of their "masters" and doing it as if considering that instead of their being "made for the people," the people are "made for them." Add to this a universal resentment at great and flagrant abuses, with the tyrannical governors supported by only a few flattering opportunists whose defection from the government can be expected when it is to their advantage. If,

72 Priestley, Lectures on History, p. 320.
under these circumstances, the risks of attempted revolution are found to be trifling, and its evils less than those already being suffered and constantly increasing, then, Priestley asked, what principles are there to restrain the people from dismissing the magistrates, punishing them, and changing completely the structure of the government? 73

To the problem of the extent of the punishment permitted he applied the standard of the common good. In defeating the ends of government by their subversion of the laws they are pledged to maintain, magistrates commit a crime worse than that of a foreign invader, whose punishment is often death. If the good of the whole society requires it, therefore, even death is justifiable. When it is the king who is thus involved for his corrupt actions, a punishment less than death may place the country in danger, for deposed, banished, or imprisoned kings still have partisans. 74

Basing his argument upon the ultimate authority of the people, he went on to deny that all laws passed by the legislature must be obeyed implicitly and that the attempt to repeal an unjust law must be limited to "a single remonstrance addressed to the legislators." 75 Rather, when government officials use their power for great oppression, that power automatically ceases. "Whatever the form of any government," he wrote,

74 Ibid., p. 24.
75 Ibid., p. 27.
whoever be the supreme magistrates, or whatever be their number; that is, to whomsoever the power of the society is delegated, their authority is, in its own nature, reversible. No man can be supposed to have resigned his natural liberty, but on conditions. These conditions, whether they be expressed or not, must be violated, whenever the plain and obvious ends of government are not answered; and a delegated power, perverted from the intention for which it was bestowed, expires of course. Magistrates, therefore, who consult not the good of the public, and who employ their power to oppress the people, are a public nuisance, and their power is abrogated ipso facto.76

Such a situation, however, could occur only in the rare circumstances when oppression is extreme, when the existing government is worse than none at all, or when the difficulties of a changed government would be a lesser evil than those of the present one.77

In lesser matters, such as laws which favor the legislators at the expense of the body of the people, the oppression ought to be clearly such before action is taken, since a government which cannot enforce a bad act will also be unable to enforce a good one.76 If the law is manifestly unjust, however, Priestley suggested that the first step toward redress should be a strong remonstrance to the legislators expressing the people's concern about the injustice and denouncing the principle by which they are oppressed. Such moral censure will usually shame the lawmakers.

77 Ibid., p. 28.
78 Ibid.
into effecting a reform. If this action and complaints to the
ting prove of no avail, the willingness of the citizens to risk
punishment rather than to submit to such a law may cause it to
become inoperative. Such conduct is justifiable on the principle
of the common good. When over-scrupulous consciences forbid such
an expression of popular disapproval, the only course left is to
elect those to office who will be responsive to the appeals of the
lower classes. It should be remembered that words alone will
never awe those in power. Unless the people support their appeals
by action, oppression will probably increase until it becomes so
great as to justify the complete overthrow of the government.

Priestley defined rebellion as "an attempt to subvert a law­
ful government."

A rebellion, therefore, is properly considered
a crime. In distinguishing between a justifiable revolution and
the crime of rebellion, the question arises of whether an oppres­
sive government, regardless of the length of its establishment,
can ever be a lawful one. A further test to be applied is whether
the "lawful, legal, and constitutional government" is a good
government—one which provides properly for the happiness of the
citizens. Failure to meet this object of civil government

79 Priestley, First Principles of Government, Works, XXII, 28;
The Present State of Liberty in Great Britain, Works, XXII, 386.

In The Present State of Liberty in Great Britain, Works, XXII,
386, he omits the steps between remonstrance and the right to
change the government.

justifies any patriotic attack upon it. Should the attempt meet with defeat, tyrants will call it a rebellion, but the act itself will not be the less glorious for that.\textsuperscript{82}

Price expressed the difference between revolution and rebellion when he justified the Revolution of 1688 in his \textit{Discourse on the Love of Our Country} delivered at an anniversary meeting of the London Revolution Society in 1789. He listed three principles of the Revolution: the right to liberty of conscience; the right of resistance to the abuse of power; and the right of the people to choose their own magistrates, "to cashier them for misconduct," and to determine for themselves the form of their government.\textsuperscript{83} He then stated that if these were not the basis of true liberty, the Revolution of 1688 would have been an "invasion" of rights rather than an "assertion" of them, a rebellion, therefore, rather than a revolution.\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{82}Priestley, First Principles of Government, Works, XXII, 24.

\textsuperscript{83}Price, \textit{Love of Country}, p. 34. This listing of principles did not originate with Price. At its centennial meeting in 1788, the Revolution Society at London had officially adopted them and had caused them to be printed in \textit{An Abstract of the History and Proceedings of the Revolution Society, in London} (London, 1789), pp. 14-15. They do, however, summarize Price's philosophy, and he used them as the basis for his 1789 discourse. The principles are listed as follows in the Abstract:

I THAT ALL CIVIL AND POLITICAL AUTHORITY IS DERIVED FROM THE PEOPLE.

II THAT ABUSE OF POWER JUSTIFIES RESISTANCE.

III THAT THE RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT, LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE, TRIAL BY JURY, THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS, AND FREEDOM OF ELECTION, OUGHT EVER TO BE HELD SACRED AND INVIOLABE.

\textsuperscript{84}Price, \textit{Love of Country}, p. 34.
CHAPTER V

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS

In the latter half of the eighteenth century theories of humanitarianism and economic liberalism were as much the subject of controversial writings as were theories of political liberalism. It was the age which produced Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations and John Howard's volumes on prison reform. It was the era of societies founded to procure the prohibition of slavery. These were the years, too, when the mounting cost of poor relief forced an examination of the lot of the poor, and the steady rise of middle class prestige brought with it a demand for middle class education. Price's works give little indication of his philosophy on these social and economic matters. Priestley, on the other hand, has expressed himself more fully in his Lectures on History as well as in other works dealing specifically with such problems as slavery, poor relief, and education. Both expressed themselves strongly on the question of slavery.

A short section in Importance of the American Revolution reveals clearly Price's abhorrence of slavery. He felt that the "NEGRO TRADE cannot be censured in language too severe."¹ He

¹Price, Importance of the American Revolution, p. 83.
found it "shocking to humanity, cruel, wicked, and diabolical." \(^2\) and the slavery it introduced "odious." \(^3\) Until Americans should abolish both the slave trade and slavery itself they would be undeserving of the liberty they themselves were fighting for. He found it self-evident that if they have a right to enslave any man, there may be others who have had the same right over them. Much as he detested slavery, he recognized the impossibility of immediate and complete emancipation. Yet while time and "manners" must in some measure be left to accomplish this work, Americans could not be excused if this were not done as speedily and effectively as circumstances would allow. In this Price was happy to hold up Britain as a good example, for there a slave became free as soon as he reached the country. \(^4\)

In a sermon on the slave trade delivered in January, 1788, Priestley developed fully the anti-slavery arguments he had presented only briefly in his Lectures on History. He opposed slavery on the bases of the obligations of Christianity, the dignity of human nature, and utilitarian considerations, and urged that petitions be sent to Parliament requesting government action to end at least the slave trade in the English colonies,

\(^2\) Price, Importance of the American Revolution, p. 83.

\(^3\) Ibid.

\(^4\) Ibid., pp. 83-84. In two letters to Benjamin Rush dated July 22, 1785, and September 24, 1787 (Rush Mss., XLIII, Nos. 61 and 118), Price indicated his continuing interest in the problem of slavery.
if not slavery itself. ⁵

From the standpoint of Christian obligation he held that slavery was indefensible. Since the Christian doctrine of brotherhood teaches men to deplore the misery of their fellowmen and requires them to work for their relief from such oppression, English Christians, if they are truly such, will be moved by the sufferings of the slaves. ⁶ Besides this, "the rule of universal justice and equity is shamefully violated" ⁷ by the conditions brought about through the slave trade—the tribal wars, the kidnappings, the avarice of chieftains who supply the victims of the slave trade, as well as the cruel treatment of the slaves themselves. ⁸ Even the benefits of Christianity—the equal, or at least sufficient opportunity of men to improve themselves and to prepare for a future state—are denied the slaves. ⁹

Priestley felt that apart from the considerations of Christianity, human nature itself provides arguments against slavery. Man, unlike the brute beast, is capable of enjoying a state of liberty and self-command, and is, therefore, more miserable than "other animals" in a state of servitude. ¹⁰ His power of

⁵ Priestley, Sermon on the Slave Trade, Works, XV, 369.
⁶ Ibid., pp. 368-369.
⁷ Ibid., p. 376.
⁸ Ibid., pp. 371-376.
⁹ Ibid., pp. 376-377.
reflection results in mental anguish for the slave until by a process of "seasoning" of the mind as well as of the body, his feelings are blunted and his condition is little better than that of the brute.  

"Man by his very nature is made for a better condition, and it is contrary to nature to reduce him thus "below the standard of his powers." Not only does slavery degrade the enslaved person, but it also debases the nature of the master by fostering in him a spirit of haughtiness, cruelty, and caprice.

The abolition of the slave trade promised profit for England in the long run, Priestley argued further. An Africa, freed from the violence occasioned by the slave trade and brought to a state of civilization, would provide a market for British goods and thus more than compensate for any losses abolition might occasion. In answer to the fear that West Indian products might be unavailable in the event of the ending of slavery, he first argued that whoever cannot pay the full price of the labor involved in the production ought to go without the commodity. Besides, the abolition of slavery might even reduce the cost of producing these commodities. They could be raised in Africa and similar areas and traded for English goods without the problem of the settlement.

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and defense of colonies. Even in the colonies the same products
could be raised more cheaply by the labor of freemen which will be
better and more cheerfully given precisely because it is free and
compensated. 16

Recognizing the danger in immediate emancipation of all
slaves, Priestley suggested the abolition of the slave trade as
the first step. This would have the effect of at least bettering
the condition of the slaves because masters would be forced to
make the most of those presently owned. Emancipation itself could
be a gradual development from a condition of villeinage as in the
feudal era to the state of freeman. An alternative might be to
make freedom the reward, as it were, of industry. A man who works
himself free will know the proper use of freedom and will be able
to become a valuable member of society. 17

Price did not discuss in his political works the problem of
prison reform. John Aikin, however, testifies that Price aided
John Howard in the writing of his treatises on prisons, 18 and that
Howard himself acknowledged this aid in letters to Price. 19 In a
letter to Benjamin Rush dated September 24, 1787, Price praised

16 Priestley, Sermon on the Slave Trade, Works, XV, 383. See
also Priestley, Lectures on History, p. 377, for another dis-
cussion of the effectiveness of free labor.

17 Priestley, Sermon on the Slave Trade, Works, XV, 384.

18 John Aikin, A View of the Character and Public Services of
the Late John Howard, Esq. (London, 1792), p. 64.

19 Aikin, John Howard, p. 65, quotes extracts from these
letters.
the "unparalleled assiduity and zeal" with which Howard had treated the subject and remarked that "his example of unspeakable benevolence" was likely to effect in England a reformation in prison conditions. Prisons would probably be converted into "penitentiary houses" where criminals would "be punished by solitude, silence, and labour and such other treatm as shall have a tendency to reform them and at the same time to make them repent.' He noted also a "prevailing conviction" of the importance of such reform and an increased activity in this direction.

Priestley considered the object of criminal law to be a decrease in the number of crimes so that men may have a sense of personal security. He felt that prisons, as they existed, could hardly be said to fulfill their purpose of preventing crime. Rather the long confinement of all kinds of prisoners in a common prison provided a kind of climate of vice so that, taught by one another, they came out more surely criminals than they had been before. Priestley recommended as a dictate of common sense the imposition of solitary confinement with only the bare necessities of life. He cited Howard as an authority in this teaching and

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21 Ibid.

22 Priestley, Lectures on History, p. 343. Priestley's discussion of criminal law and the punishment of criminals (pp. 348-358) indicates an attitude conditioned by a practical concern for security rather than by a sentiment of humanitarianism.
observed that perfect solitude gives an opportunity for reflection and may often be the only means of reclaiming a criminal. 23

Both Price and Priestley advocated that poor relief be administered through a system of compulsory insurance against accident, illness, and old age. The idea of life insurance was becoming popular in England and benevolent societies for this purpose were springing up in many places. 24 Since much of Price's fame rested on the calculations he had made and published in this field, 25 it was quite natural that he should suggest some such system for the relief of the poor. In an essay on population he noted the serious condition of the poor, especially day-laborers whose wages had been increased to only four or five times that of 1514, while the cost of food and clothing had increased seven to fifteen times. 26 He and Baron Francis Maseres had unsuccessfully urged the enactment of an insurance measure, and in 1786 he lent moral support to John Acland in a similar project. 27 He

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23 Priestley, Lectures on History, pp. 350-351.

24 Richard Price, Prefatory Letter in John Acland, A Plan for Rendering the Poor Independent on Public Contribution, Founded on the Basis of the Friendly Societies... to Which is Added, A Letter from Dr. Price... (Exeter, 1786), p. iii.


considered it reasonable and equitable that the poor, while they were young and strong, should be obliged, by small savings, to contribute to their own support in the event of accident, illness, or old age. The organisation of Friendly Societies indicated that this was a system toward which the poor themselves were favorable. It would encourage in the poor the development of frugality, industry, and virtue. At the same time it would promote the population of the Kingdom, and for the dangerous plans upon which many of the Friendly Societies operated it would substitute a general plan "well-formed, substantial, and permanent." 29

Priestley was much more explicit in his reasoning on this problem. He opposed the system of poor relief in England because he felt that it made men improvident and indifferent toward anything beyond subsistence when they were certain that the law would provide for them. 30 In thus removing the necessity of foresight the government had debased human nature. 31 It would have been much better, he thought, if the poor had been left to themselves without any interference by the state, for then they would have been forced to look ahead and to provide for the future.

29 Ibid.
30 Priestley, Lectures on History, p. 279.
31 Joseph Priestley, Some Considerations on the State of the Poor in General, Prefixed to an Account of a Society for Encouraging the Industrious Poor, Works, XXV, 314-319; Lectures on History, p. 280.
This would probably have meant suffering and distress, but the truly deserving poor would have found relief through the charity of the rich. He had little hope that the evil, grown by that time to large proportions, could be easily remedied.  

The answer to the problem, Priestley felt, lay first in the removal of temptations to idleness and vice by the suppression of "supernumerary alehouses." Another remedy would be to enable the poor to see some prospect of bettering their condition in proportion to their industry. Some of the industrious poor had already attempted to do this by organizing clubs by which they could provide for the future through present weekly contributions, but mismanagement had made these clubs less successful than they ought to be. It would seem wise, therefore, for the state to do for these poor what they had been unsuccessfully attempting to do for themselves, that is, to provide a fund in which their savings might be deposited for future use with no fear of loss. Perhaps the best method would be to oblige the poor by law to contribute to such a fund from their weekly wages. To a possible objection that this would be incompatible with man's right to dispose of his own property as he deems best, Priestley replied that this

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32 Priestley, State of the Poor, Works, XXV, 316; Lectures on History, p. 280.
33 Priestley, State of the Poor, Works, XXV, 316, 319.
34 Ibid., pp. 316-317.
power is actually possessed by no person who acquires property in a civil society. He added that "it always is, and must be taken for granted, that every society has a right to apply whatever property is found or acquired within itself to any purpose which the good of the society at large really requires." He argued further that few taxes are more equitable than this one which would oblige the improvident to do for themselves what industrious persons are presently obliged to do for them. Nor would present security have to be sacrificed to the prospect of future security, since wages, which must always be sufficient for maintenance, would be forced upward by a plan such as that proposed.

A public provision for teaching the poor to read and write, Priestley thought, would be another means of improving their wretched condition. Where such provision had already been made, he noted, the poor were found to have a greater sense of honor and spirit of industry. Their economic condition was proportionately better, also, than that of the illiterate poor. In places where people could not read and write there was a spirit of abjection; industry and economy were at low ebb and there was no sense of shame in having to be supported by others.

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36 Priestley, State of the Poor, Works, XXV, 318.
37 Ibid.
39 Priestley, State of the Poor, Works, XXV, 318.
40 Ibid., p. 319.
Nowhere in his political works did Price discuss the problem of governmental regulation of commerce and industry. Priestley, however, in his Lectures on History indicated an approval of the principles of economic liberalism. Individuals, when left to themselves, he thought, are sufficiently provident and will seek to better their condition. Since constant attention to the matter of improvement will generally make them more adept at it, they seldom find interference by governors of any advantage.\(^{41}\) Government intervention in the form of subsidies for the exportation of particular products he considered of questionable wisdom, since the nation as a whole could hardly profit from the exportation of articles unmarketable without such subsidy. The only excuse for government aid to manufacturers would be that of convenience or accommodation of the consumers. Actually, however, when exports are subsidized, the consumer is forced to pay both the subsidy through taxation and also the higher prices resulting from monopoly.\(^{42}\)

Commerce, which depends upon free intercourse between nations, would in the long run advance the cause of peace, Priestley felt. Its immediate advantage is the promotion of industry and the production of the material conveniences which increase the happiness of men.\(^{43}\) Interference by statesmen, however, can only be

\(^{41}\) Priestley, Lectures on History, p. 371

\(^{42}\) Ibid., pp. 374-375.

\(^{43}\) Ibid., p. 388.
detrimental to commerce because by restrictions of trade for present advantage they prevent the future advantage to be gained by freedom in this matter. A good natural rule is that only those restrictions ought to be placed upon commerce which will oblige the people to increase their own labor and expand their own manufactures. He felt that Colbert's regulation of corn exportation had injured France. It would have been much better to follow the advice of the old merchant who, when asked how the state could best favor trade, answered, "Laissez nous faire." Among the restrictions unfavorable to trade Priestley listed the trading monopolies of joint powers exercised by towns corporate and the system of entail which makes the alienation of land impossible. Religious persecution and the difficulty of naturalization he also felt to be hindrances to commerce.

Under a system of perfect liberty of trade, Priestley contended, each nation would supply those articles which it could best produce. The international relations thus necessitated would make the preservation of peace the concern of all, and disputes would be settled by methods other than war. Free trade would thus become the means of promoting the happiness of mankind and of restoring the world to its "pristine paradisical state."

Price considered the establishment of a "wise and liberal

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44 Priestley, Lectures on History, p. 392.
46 Ibid., p. 398.
plan of education" necessary if a liberal government in America was to play a part in the improvement of the world.\(^{47}\) The purpose of education, he felt, is "to teach how to think, rather than what to think; or to lead into the best way of searching for truth, rather than to instruct in truth itself."\(^{48}\) It should lead to a habit of patient investigation rather than to an attachment to a particular system or opinion.\(^{49}\) While he did not feel qualified to prescribe a particular method of education, he felt that to be best which most effectually frees the mind, makes it quick to discern evidence, and ready to follow that evidence regardless of its source. Such a method of education prevents prejudice, instills a love of truth, inculcates a sense of fairness, and leaves one with a conviction of the need for further information.\(^{50}\) It uses "systems" or explanations of them only as guides and helps to inquiry, not as standards of truth. It presents the evidence for both sides of every question and forms a habit of giving assent only in the presence of overwhelming evidence.\(^{51}\)

Priestley's discussions of education in a free state were of a more practical turn. He felt that a liberal education for a man

\(^{47}\) Price, Importance of the American Revolution, p. 50.

\(^{48}\) Ibid., p. 51.

\(^{49}\) Ibid.

\(^{50}\) Ibid., p. 56; Price, Evidence for a Future Period of Improvement, pp. 41-42.

\(^{51}\) Price, Importance of the American Revolution, p. 57.
of the world ought to include courses in civil history and in such "objects of civil policy" as theories of law, government, commerce, and industry, so that understanding the constitution of the country and the things which will improve it, they may be inspired with a true spirit of patriotism. Yet he did not favor governmental control of education, although at the same time he held that the state could not ignore education altogether. Since without the ability to read man would be little more than a machine limited to some one kind of occupation, he felt that schools ought to be erected in every district and provision made for instructing all in reading and writing. The state, however, ought not to go beyond this and some inducement to attract proper teachers.

Priestley objected to the suggestion that the state had either a right or a duty to introduce and enforce a particular plan of education. Such a plan, he agreed, would prevent factions in the state, influence the conduct of men, and establish and perpetuate a particular form of government; but it would also be prejudicial to the ends of both education and civil society, he warned, and it would change the form of the British government. An arbitrary code of education would be inconsistent with man's

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52 Priestley, Lectures on History, p. xviii.
53 Ibid., pp. xxix-xxx.
54 Ibid., p. 276.
55 Priestley, First Principles of Government, Works, XXII, 43-44.
capacity for infinite improvement and with the very object of edu-
cation—the formation of wise and virtuous men, since the uniform-
ity and restraints such a code would impose would prevent experi-
ments for the betterment of education and would thus hinder the
improvement of man himself. 56

State control of education he considered detrimental to civil
liberties and subversive of the object of a civil society—the
happiness of its members. One source of happiness is to be found
in man's domestic relations, that is, in his right to choose his
wife and to direct the education of his children. The duty of
education has been entrusted by God to parents so that they may
form the children and direct their habits and conduct with a view
to their present advantage and their future well-being. Besides
this, nature itself has established so close a relationship be-
tween parents and children that to remove children from the con-
trol of their parents by forcing them into public places of educa-
tion and training them in religious principles opposed to those of
the parents would be equal to requiring the sacrifice of con-
science to a civil magistrate. 57 Yet even if the inculcation of
certain religious, moral, and political principles were thought
to be conducive to the good of the state, to instill them effec-
tually into the minds of the young would meet with insuperable
obstacles in a country such as England, for it would necessitate

57 Ibid., p. 49.
complete separation of children from their parents until the children should reach an age where their judgment is absolutely fixed. 58

Priestley's final argument against establishing a code of education is that it would completely alter Britain's mixed form of government, for a uniform code would require administration by a single set of men, and no single group could have equal regard for all parts of the constitution. If education were entrusted to the court, as would be most likely, the government would become predominantly regal with the king's power increasing to such an extent as to favor the establishment of a despotism. Were the Lords to assume control, the government would become aristocratic in form, while a republic would probably be the result if educational matters were placed in the care of the Commons. The balance existing in the English government would be best maintained if education were left with the parents. The best interests of society, then, require that the right of education be "inviolably preserved to individuals." 59

As in politics, so in social and economic problems, both Price and Priestley felt the right of the individual--to personal liberty and security, to freedom of thought, and to the working out of his own economic problems--to be of ultimate importance.

59 Ibid., pp. 53-54.
Although it is difficult to make a comparison because of the inadequacy of Price's writings on these matters, it would seem that Price's attitude was more that of the humanitarian, while Priestley based his theories on utility and on his conviction that the good of the majority of the individuals in a civil society was in reality the good of the whole society.
CONCLUSION

Richard Price and Joseph Priestley were theologians by profession and, as it were, political theorists by necessity. Their theological speculations had led them far from both Anglican and Dissenting orthodoxy. As Unitarians they were cut off from the active participation in politics which even in their student days they had conceived to be the right of every member of civil society. Although it was this right of participation regardless of religious creed which they attempted to vindicate, the theories they formulated rather naturally embraced other areas of political life. Had they been Anglican by conviction, or had Anglicanism admitted a broad enough policy of toleration, much of the basis for their political tracts would have been eliminated. Events in America, Ireland, and France were only the occasions for their publications; the real object of their attacks was the civil establishment of a particular religion to the practical exclusion of all others.

That the political works of Price and Priestley exercised considerable influence in their own times can hardly be denied. Their pamphlets enjoyed large sales and were widely read, highly praised, and severely criticized. In spite of contemporary testimony of inadequate oratorical ability, they seem not to have
lacked audiences especially for their political sermons. Neverthe­less, their philosophy was neither profound nor original nor really very radical.

Over a period of twenty years, 1768 to 1788, there is no evidence of substantial change or growth in the political ideas of either Price or Priestley. Price's basic philosophy is to be found in his Two Tracts on Civil Liberty published in 1778. Later publications only reiterated and applied the principles expressed there. Similarly, Priestley's theories are set forth in two early works--An Essay on the First Principles of Government first published in 1768, and Lectures on History and General Policy delivered at Warrington Academy before 1768 but published only in 1788. Although Priestley asserted that the lectures had been revised and enlarged for publication, the revision seems to have included only references to newer works which substantiated his principles rather than any changes in the theories themselves.

Neither writer intended to advance original doctrines. Both supported their theories with appeals to the authority of earlier writers, especially Locke, Voltaire, and Montesquieu. Both looked backward to the Revolution of 1688 for their expressed principles and forward only in the hope of a practical realization of those principles.

Certainly in their own time Price and Priestley were consid­ered dangerous radicals and their writings inflammatory. Yet an unbiased study of their works reveals that it was as rather mod­erate liberals rather than as extreme radicals that they would
have applied their doctrines. In denouncing the civil establishment of a particular religion they primarily opposed the taxation of all for the benefit of one denomination, as well as the imposition of a religious test as a qualification for participation in government or the pursuit of certain professions. They indicated also that complete representation in Parliament was the ideal for which to strive, but neither held it to be a sine qua non of good government. Price repeatedly asserted that, provided representation was not totally inadequate, an independent and uncorrupted legislature was more important than one which was merely completely representative. In 1783 he specifically advised the Volunteers of Ireland that although he opposed any religious test for electors, he advocated a property qualification, since universal suffrage was not really feasible at the time. Priestley in 1768 categorically denied the necessity of universal suffrage for a free and representative government. He felt that only property-holders could be sufficiently interested in government to participate intelligently in elections. He seems not to have changed this stand in later works.

Probably the most disturbing theory advanced by Price and Priestley was that of the right of revolution. The idea that the people have the right to dismiss their government officials and to punish them if necessary must have seemed radical indeed. Yet a closer study of their works shows that neither writer endorsed such ultimate action except as a last resort. Rather they held the much more conservative view that the right of resistance
demands constant vigilance on the part of the people and immediate peaceful correction of abuses in order to prevent the violence of revolution.

Price wrote little on the social and economic aspects of government activity. Priestley's philosophy, however, tended to stress individualism and utilitarianism in these areas. He was also an avowed advocate of economic liberalism and free trade. This emphasis tends to give a certain coldness to his arguments for social and economic reform in England.

In view of the fact that Price and Priestley advanced no really original theories, progressed little, if at all, in the development of their ideas, and counseled moderation in the application of their tenets, the question arises as to why their writings remained popular and continued to engender controversy over a period of twenty years. Perhaps the answer lies in a combination of circumstances. While their works are today studied impartially and objectively, they were in their own time modified by the subjectivity of contemporary opinion, the shades of meaning to be imparted by the orator, and such external events as the revolutionary movements in America, Ireland, and France. Their writings were in the seventeenth century Whig tradition and if their views were not new, at least they were understood by a generation nourished in an intellectual milieu familiar with Locke and his interpreters. The revolutionary excitement of the late eighteenth century gave new importance to well-worn "radical" views, and thus, perhaps greater importance in their own time to the views
of Richard Price and Joseph Priestley.
CRITICAL ESSAY ON AUTHORITIES

I. PRIMARY MATERIALS

A. WORKS BY RICHARD PRICE

For convenience Price's political works may be divided into three categories: tracts dealing with political theories, tracts dealing with "political arithmetic" and economics, and political sermons. Of these, the second group of works is of least importance for this study. It includes An Appeal to the Public on the Subject of the National Debt (London, 1772) and Observations on Reversionary Payments ... 2 vols., 5th ed. (London, 1792). These works and the financial and economic supplements which Price invariably added to any published work make dull reading and yield only occasional insights into his political thinking. Other similar works are John Horne Tooke and Richard Price, Facts: Addressed to ... All the Subjects of Great Britain and Ireland, 3rd ed. (London, 1780?) and the letter written by Price as a preface to John Acland, A Plan for Rendering the Poor Independent (Exeter, 1786).

Price's political theories are best set forth in Two Tracts on Civil Liberty (London, 1778), which includes a "General Introduction" of some importance, as well as Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty, 8th ed. (London, 1778) and Additional Observations on the Nature and Value of Civil Liberty (London, 1777). These tracts were Price's first complete expositions of his political philosophy. Both express essentially the same ideas, since Additional Observations was intended to clarify certain misinterpretations of the first tract. Together they form the core of Price's political philosophy, and later works generally repeat or enlarge upon the ideas found there.

Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution (London, 1785) is an application of Price's theories to the

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1. Since complete titles of all works are given in the bibliography following this essay, long titles of eighteenth century works have been abbreviated within the essay.
United States. This edition was evidently not a first, but an English edition intended to prevent a spurious publication of the tract. An application of his ideas on Parliamentary representation to the Irish situation is to be found in a letter published in the Proceedings relative to the Ulster Assembly of Volunteer Delegates . . . (Belfast, 1783). Both works are somewhat more specific than the earlier works.

Four sermons also reveal Price's political tenets. The earliest of these, A Sermon . . . at Hackney (London, 1779) and A Discourse . . . at Hackney, on February 21, 1781 (London, n.d.), deal with the nature and source of government and urge vigilance against abuses in government. Of the two, the first is probably more openly critical of the British Parliamentary system as it operated at that time. Both were inspired by a sympathy for the American cause and were probably more influential as sermons than as pamphlets. The last of these sermons, A Sermon on the Love of Country (London, 1789) was a summary of the theories Price had held through the years. Again, it was probably more startling as an address than as a pamphlet, while the fact of the French Revolution made it seem to Edmund Burke and others of his political views to be extremely dangerous. Less controversial, but definitely political was The Evidence for a Future Period of Improvement (London, 1787), a sermon delivered in connection with the erection of a Dissenting academy at Hackney. In it Price stressed especially liberty of expression, of education, and of conscience.

Of less importance for this thesis are Price's letters to certain Americans. Manuscripts of six letters to Benjamin Rush, at present in the custody of the Library Company of Philadelphia, give some evidence of Price's political views. A few letters by Price are to be found also in Letters to and from Richard Price (Cambridge, Mass., 1903) reprinted from the Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, May, 1903.

E. WORKS OF JOSEPH PRIESTLEY

Although written toward the close of his life, Priestley's Memoirs, 2 vols. (London, 1806-1807) are an important source of information concerning his life and political views. The Memoirs are available in a separate edition, as well as in the first two volumes of The Theological and Miscellaneous Works of Joseph Priestley edited by John Towill Rutt, 25 vols. (London, 1817-1832). Rutt supplements the Memoirs with letters written by Priestley. These, however, are not of major importance for this study and in any event must be used with care, since a number of errors in their reproduction have been discovered.
Rutt's collection of Priestley's works is indispensable for a study of Priestley's political philosophy, for it gathers together most of the pertinent works.

For a general view of Priestley's theories an Essay on the First Principles of Government (London, 1771) and The Present State of Liberty in Great Britain and Her Colonies (London, 1769) are important. Both were originally published before 1770. The first is a long essay stating Priestley's fundamental principles, while the second, published anonymously during the persecution of John Wilkes, uses the catechism form to air the author's views. The fundamental theories set forth in these works are enlarged upon in Priestley, Lectures on History and General Policy (Birmingham, 1788). The lectures were originally delivered at Warrington Academy before 1763, but they were published only in 1788. The published edition does not differ essentially from the lectures as they were given at the academy.

While some of the works listed in the bibliography make only passing references to Priestley's political theories, others tend to express them more fully. Two of the latter type are A View of the Principles and Conduct of Protestant Dissenters (London, 1769) and An Address to Protestant Dissenters . . . on the Approaching Elections (London, 1774). His theories on religious toleration are to be gleaned from such works as A Free Address to Protestant Dissenters as Such (London, 1771) and A Letter of Advice to those Dissenters Who Conduct the Application . . . for Relief from Certain Penal Laws (London, 1773). Both works were published anonymously, as was A Free Address . . . in Favor of Roman Catholics (London, 1780). This last work also strongly indicates Priestley's utilitarian outlook. A later work on religious freedom is A Letter to . . . William Pitt (London, 1787).

Some Considerations on the State of the Poor in General (Birmingham, 1787) and A Sermon on . . . the Slave Trade (Birmingham, 1788) supplement the Lectures on History for a study of Priestley's theories on economic and social problems.

C. OTHER WORKS

Two works which are not essential to this study but which are of interest in connection with Price's theories are John Cartwright, The Legislative Rights of the Commonalty Vindicated; or, Take Your Choice! (London, 1777) and the Revolution Society in London, An Abstract of the History and Proceedings of the Revolution Society in London (London, 1785).
Some primary biographical material for Richard Price is provided by Joseph Priestley, *A Discourse on the Occasion of the Death of Dr. Price* (London, 1791) and Andrew Kibbs, *An Address at the Interment of the Late Rev. Dr. Richard Price* (London, 1791). Both are consciously eulogistic.

II. SECONDARY WORKS

A. POLITICAL THOUGHT

A number of works on eighteenth century thought and politics are available and pertinent. Most of them are valuable for the general picture they give of the political situation of the time. Particularly helpful are Simon Maccoby, *English Radicalism, 1762-1785: The Origins* (London, 1955) and *English Radicalism, 1785-1832: From Paine to Cobbett* (London, 1955). Quoting copiously from contemporary memoirs and newspapers, Maccoby gives a detailed account of the agitation for social, economic, and political reform in England from 1762 to 1832. Since the author's main concern is with Parliamentary activity and the tactics of the Opposition in Parliament, his references to Price and Priestley are necessarily limited, though he indicates the importance of their works in their own times. Brief indications of the position of Price and Priestley are to be found also in Simon Maccoby, *The English Radical Tradition, 1763-1914* (New York, 1957). This work is primarily a collection of readings illustrative of English Radicalism as described by Maccoby.

G. S. Veitch, *The Genesis of Parliamentary Reform* (London, 1913) devotes the first four chapters to background material for the Parliamentary problem. While neither this work nor G. S. Veitch, "The Early English Radicals," in *The Social and Political Ideas of Some Representative Thinkers of the Revolutionary Era* edited by F. J. C. Hearnshaw (London, 1931), pp. 24-47, is directly pertinent to a study of the political theories of Price and Priestley, both are useful for the background information they supply. Similar to these is Walter Lyon Blease, *A Short History of English Liberalism* (London, 1913) which also mentions Price and Priestley only in passing.

The first chapter of C. B. Roylance Kent, *The English Radicals* (London, 1899) is pertinent. Its chief value lies in the brief picture it gives of the position of the Radicals in this period, as well as in the author's estimate of the place of Price and Priestley in the Radical scheme. Harold Laski, *Political Thought in England from Locke to Bentham* (New York, 1925) also touches briefly upon their theories.
Still the outstanding account of eighteenth century thought is Sir Leslie Stephen, History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century, 2 vols., (London, 1881). Stephen discusses both the political and the theological tenets of Price and Priestley in the framework of the whole thought of the eighteenth century rather than merely in their relationship to their own decades. Although the treatment is somewhat unsympathetic and at times even caustic, the work is of great value for an understanding of the eighteenth century.

Although more sympathetic and necessarily more restricted in scope, Anthony Lincoln, Some Political and Social Ideas of English Dissent, 1763-1800 (Cambridge, Eng., 1938) is a useful exposition of Dissenting thought in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Lincoln includes separate chapters on Price and Priestley based on one or two works of each, but he makes no attempt to correlate or compare their political ideas.

B. MEMOIRS AND BIOGRAPHIES

A valuable source of biographical material is to be found in the articles on Price and Priestley in the Dictionary of National Biography, edited by Sidney Lee, VII (New York, 1909), 334-337, 357-376.

Biographies of Joseph Priestley tend to emphasize his scientific contributions while ignoring his political works. The exception to this general rule is Anne Holt, Joseph Priestley (London, 1931), which attempts in one small volume to give an all-around picture. Although Miss Holt's work is inadequate and obviously sympathetic, it is useful especially for the vast bibliography of both primary and secondary materials provided by the author.

Some biographical material about Richard Price is available even from the time of his death. Two eulogistic works mentioned earlier as primary sources are Andrew Kippis, An Address Delivered at the Interment of the Late Rev. Dr. Richard Price (London, 1791) and Joseph Priestley, A Discourse on the Occasion of the Death of Dr. Price (London, 1791). Priestley's work includes a short sketch of Price's life and a list of his publications.

Probably the first designedly biographical work on Price was William Morgan, Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. Richard Price (London, 1815) written by Price's nephew from memory and some notes. It was intended to be a tribute and is, therefore, a subjective account. Morgan digresses frequently to inject his own views on the matter being discussed or to inveigh against the "government" then in power. Although Morgan's close association
with his uncle makes his testimony valuable, it must be remembered that the Memoirs were written more than twenty years after the death of Price. Care must be taken to check the accuracy of the author's statements of fact and interpretation.

Roland Thomas, Richard Price, Philosopher and Apostle of Liberty (London, 1924) and Carl Cone, Torchbearer of Freedom (Lexington, 1952) are much more accurate and objective accounts, but they, too, are definitely sympathetic. Thomas' interest in Price seems to be based on the facts that both claimed Glamorganshire, Wales, as home and that certain of Thomas' ancestors seem also to have been related to Price. Thomas corrects many of Morgan's inaccuracies. Of real value is the author's collection of works written by Price, works occasioned by him, and works written about him. Cone bases much of his biography on Thomas. Although his stated purpose is to show Price's influence on eighteenth century thought, in Torchbearer of Freedom Cone has produced a work which is primarily biographical. There is some discussion of Price's political works, and slender evidence is presented to prove that they formed an important guiding principle at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, 1787. While Cone gives reliable biographical data, his eagerness to prove Price's influence must be toned down by caution on the part of the reader.

Brief references to the friendship between Price and John Howard, and to the help which Howard received from Price in the publication of his famous works on prisons, are to be found in John Aikin, A View of the ... Late John Howard (London, 1792).

C. ARTICLES

A nearly contemporary description of Joseph Priestley is to be found in [Francis Jeffrey], Review of Joseph Priestley, Memoirs of Dr. Joseph Priestley ..., Edinburgh Review or Critical Journal, IX (October, 1806), 136-161.

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I. PRIMARY SOURCES

A. BOOKS


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2.) Additional Observations on the Nature and Value of Civil Liberty, and the War with America: Also Observations on Schemes for raising Money by Public Loans; An Historical Deduction and Analysis of the National Debt; And a brief Account of the Debts and Resources of France. First published London, 1777.

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A Free Address to Protestant Dissenters as Such. By a Dissenter. 2nd ed. London, 1771. XXII, 247-301.


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A Letter to a Layman, on the Subject of the Rev. Mr. Lindsey's Proposal for a Reformed English Church upon the Plan of the Late Dr. Samuel Clarke. London, 1774. XXI, 29-52.
A Letter to the Right Hon. William Pitt, First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer, on the Subjects of Toleration and Church Establishments; Occasioned by His Speech against the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, on Wednesday, the 28th of March, 1767. 2nd ed. London, 1767. XIX, 111-134.


The Proper Constitution of a Church, considered in a Sermon Preached at the New Meeting in Birmingham, November 3, 1762; to which is prefixed a Prefatory Discourse, Relating to the present State of those who are called Rational Dissenters. n.p., 1782. XV, 45-69.


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B. ARTICLES


APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Sister M. Gregory Renzelmann, C.S.A. has been read and approved by a board of three members of the Department of History.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

5 June 1961
Date

Franklin J. Walker
Signature of Adviser